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# RUGBY WORLD

WALES

## INSIDE!

- PAUL JAMES
- DTH VAN DER MERWE
- KEN OWENS

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INSPIRED  
ME TO PLAY  
RUGBY"  
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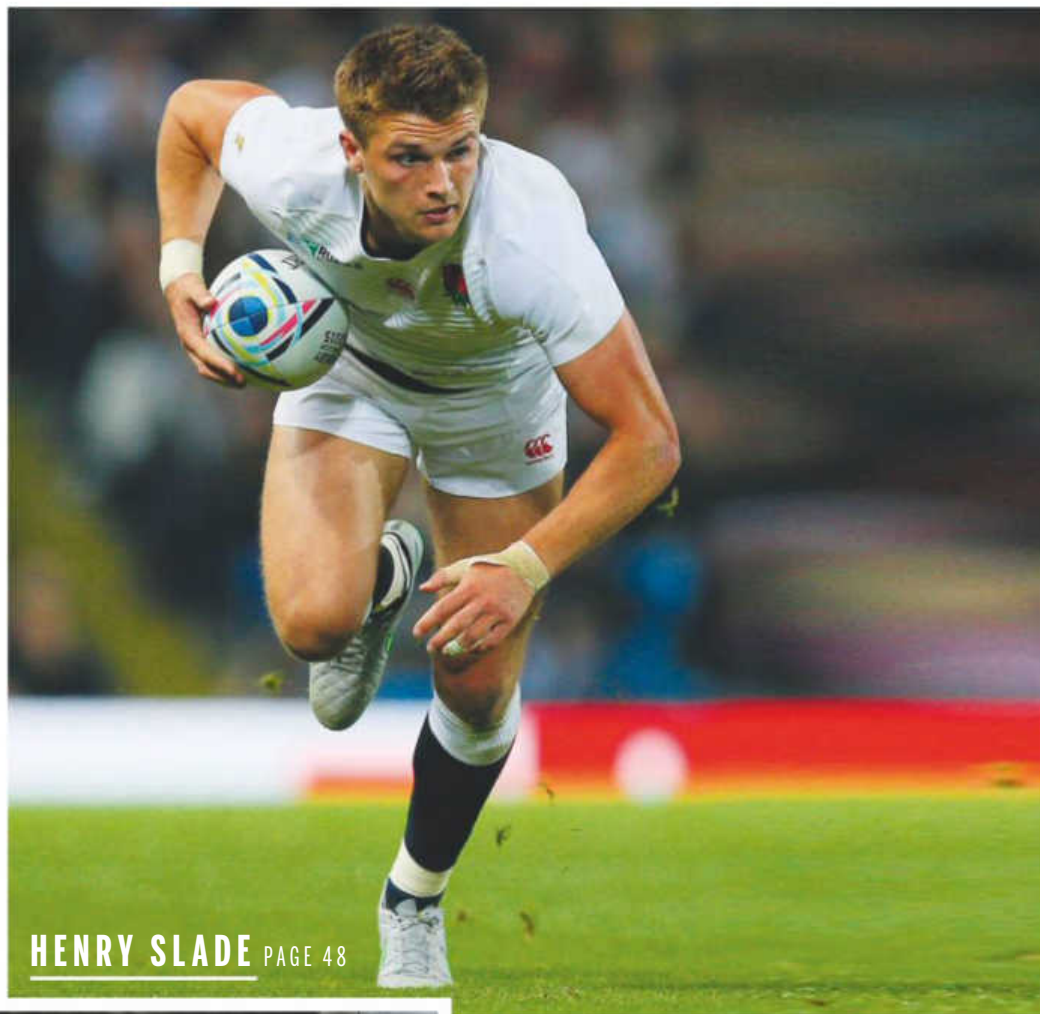
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# JANUARY LINE-UP



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# Rugby's future is brighter than ever



Such is the utter dominance of the World Cup, our game works in four-year cycles. So as we bid farewell to 2015, we must look forward.

England have a stronger sense of a new beginning than most. New head coach Eddie Jones's in-tray is full and we may see many new faces for the Six Nations. One man we'd like to see involved is Henry Slade, the gifted Exeter Chiefs playmaker (P48).

Over the Severn Bridge, there's less upheaval, with Warren Gatland in situ until 2019. We pick the men to take on his final World Cup assault on P58.

Across the Irish Sea, Joe Schmidt's task will be to pick up momentum lost in the autumn. Iain Henderson is one individual upon whom much faith has been placed. He opens up on P54.

Scottish optimism abounds. The fact Murrayfield sold out faster than ever for the coming Six Nations shows expectation of high times ahead. Young Jonny Gray (P62) leads their renaissance.

But while we rightly look ahead for the next generation, we must pause to remember a gentle giant who left an indelible mark on our sport.

Jonah Lomu's untimely death affected us all and we pass on our sincerest condolences to his family. His explosivity on the pitch stood in stark contrast to his grace and generosity off the pitch. Simply, he embodied rugby's values. Rest easy.

*Owain Jones*

**Owain Jones, Editor**

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**Rugby growing up**  
Young girls from Laos  
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## THIS MONTH'S WINNERS AND LOSERS



### ▲ WINNER PLAYER WELFARE FIRST

The RPA's new £7m deal with Premiership Rugby and the RFU, which ensures this money will be spent on safeguarding player welfare, is a sign that increased TV revenues are being used responsibly. A great move by all parties.



### ▲ LOSER TIME TO STAMP IT OUT

There have been a few high-profile instances of stamping in the last month, with Matthew Rees (above) and Brendan McKibbin two of those to be sent off. Rugby needs to nip this in the bud with firm disciplinary action and lengthy bans.



### ▲ WINNER RESPONSE TO TERROR

Those horrifying attacks during November affected fans of all sports in France, and rugby was no different. We must not be cowed so, says *Rugby World*, keep turning up in droves.

PICS: ACTION IMAGES, GETTY IMAGES & WORLD RUGBY





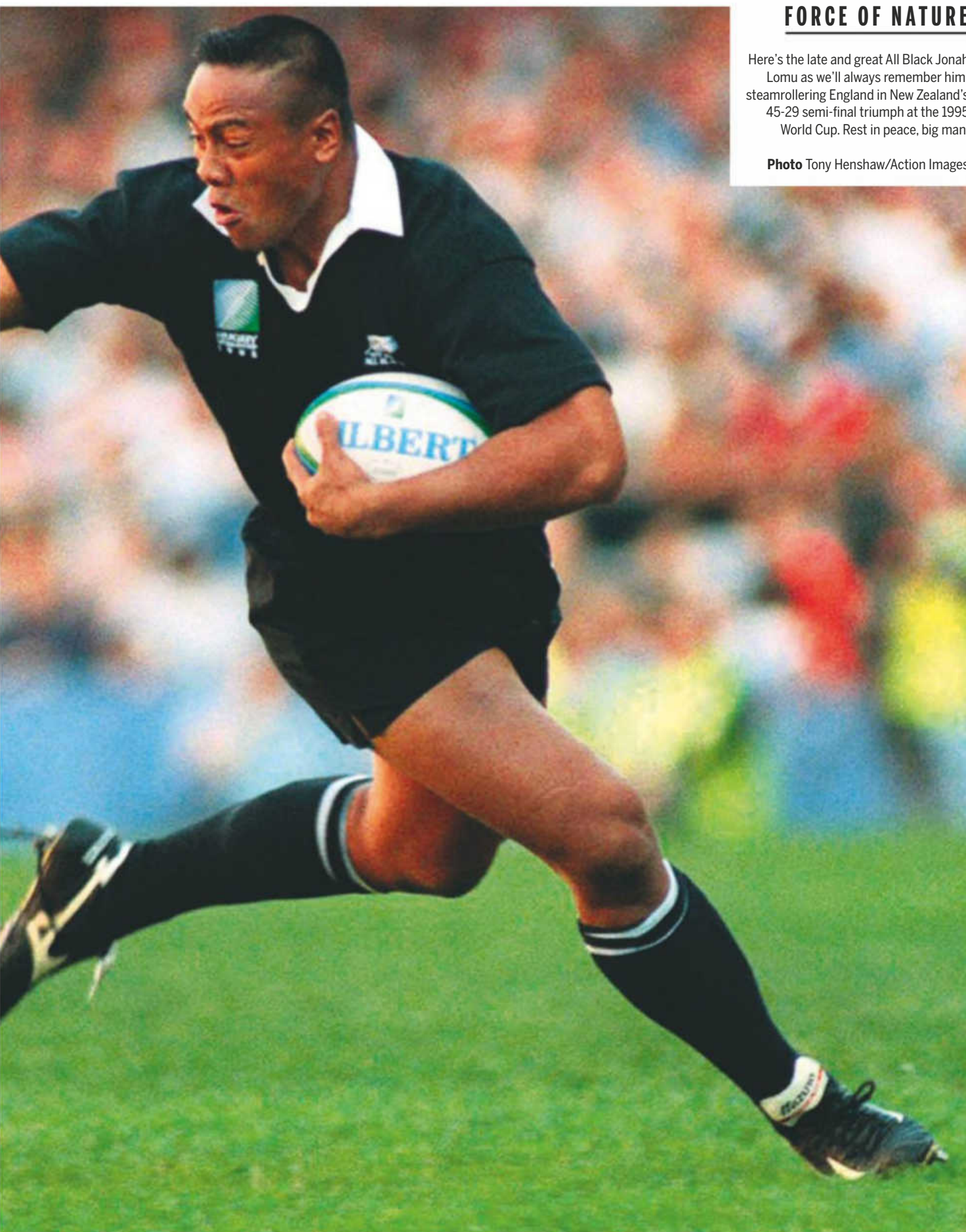




## FORCE OF NATURE

Here's the late and great All Black Jonah Lomu as we'll always remember him: steamrolling England in New Zealand's 45-29 semi-final triumph at the 1995 World Cup. Rest in peace, big man.

**Photo** Tony Henshaw/Action Images







## HALF AND HALF

It's hard to tell where Toulon's Delon Armitage finishes and Wasps' try-scorer Frank Halai begins as the pair crash into the posts during the English side's 32-6 demolition of the European champions.

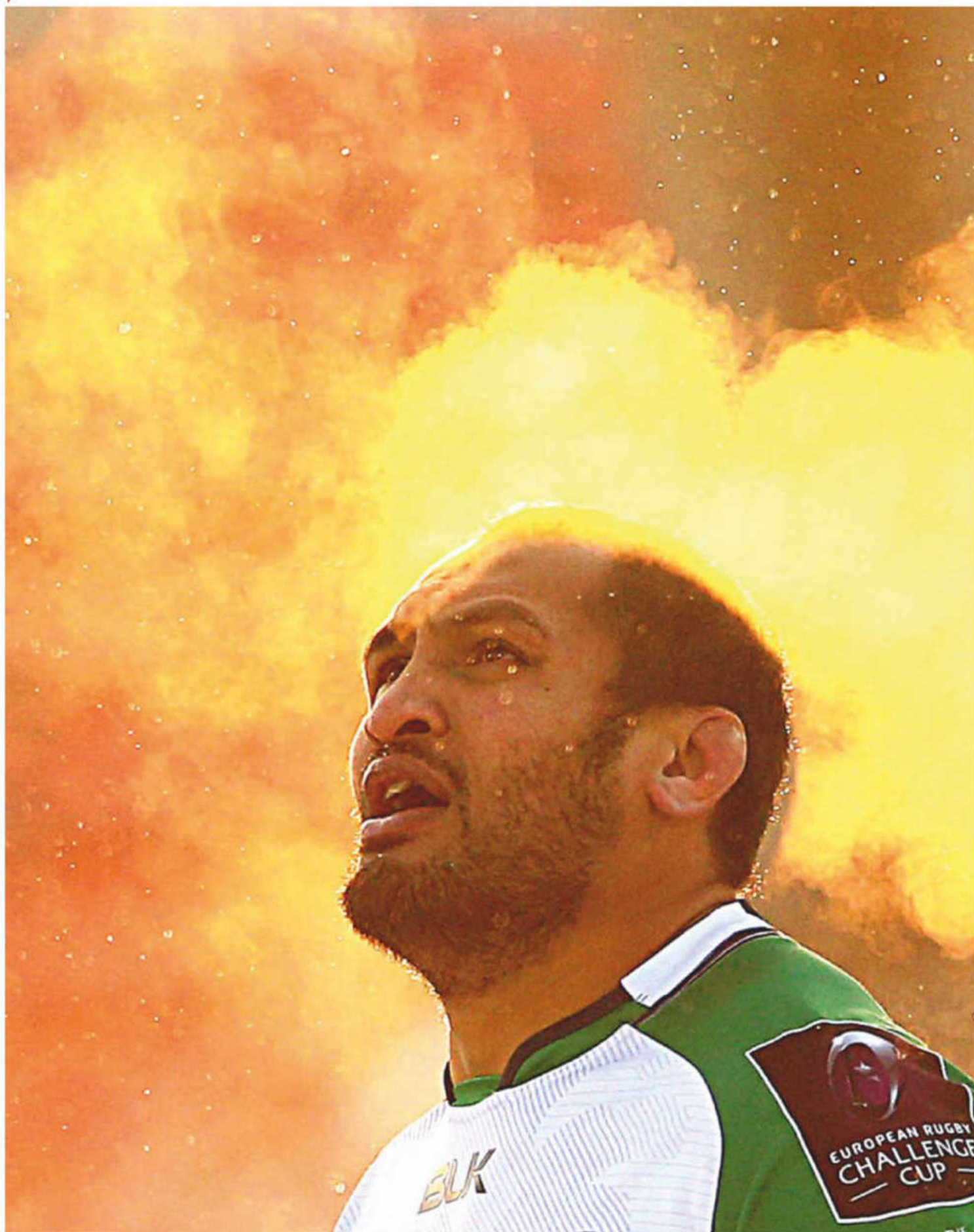
**Photo** Andrew Boyers/Action Images















## **FIRE AND ICE**

Flames lick the sky behind Connacht's George Naoupu as the No 8 prepares to face Siberian side Enisei in the European Challenge Cup. The Irish province won 31-14 as temperatures fell below -20°C.

**Photo** James Crombie/Inpho





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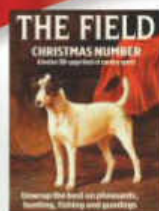
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# INTOUCH

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## Sorry for liking beer!

As a saggy middle-aged man, may I apologise for my regular trips to the toilet (*Letters*, Nov 2015).

However, at my age I have few pleasures left in life and drinking beer and watching rugby are two of them. The authorities at Twickenham are doing their best to discourage drinking by providing poor-quality beer at extortionate prices, but fortunately the hostelries



▲ **Simple pleasure** Supporters share a beer in Cardiff this year

in Twickenham town have more consideration for their customers.

Finally, I think young people, who don't need to visit the facilities during a match, should be playing rugby on a Saturday rather than watching it.

**John Throup**  
Heaton Mersey, Cheshire

## The mark of a man

Stuart Lancaster's dignity in defeat, and the way he has taken responsibility, shows him to be a man of resolution. By also not resigning the coach's job

## STAR LETTER

## Driving mauls are driving me crazy

Commentators describe the scrum as 'the dark art' but in recent years it seems the driving maul from the lineout has far surpassed the innuendos of the scrum.

We applaud the kick to the corner as a progressive move as we hope it will furnish an exciting try instead of a boring three-pointer. But is there anything more boring than a herd of players tussling to and fro five metres out, with the odds so heavily stacked in favour of the advancing side that without infringing the defence concede those five points.

Over the last few seasons, teams have used the maul more and more as a way to the try-line. I had thought 'up your jumper' rugby was consigned to the 1970s.

One solution would be to outlaw a driving maul on the five-metre line. It might stop teams trundling towards the try-line in a way no one quite believes is legal.

**Wayne Huttly, Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire**

**RW says:** Rugby once allowed defending teams to sack the maul, but that just led to an even more congested midfield. There's no easy answer to this, but we would love to see teams sometimes be more imaginative.



▲ **Herd of buffalo** South Africa get a driving maul going against USA – but is this a ploy that fans want to see?



▲ **Dignified exit** Ex-England boss Stuart Lancaster behaved impeccably during a difficult period, staying true to the values that he preached

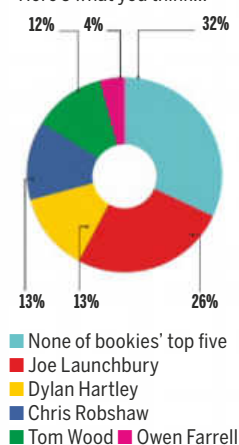
straightaway, he gave the RFU breathing space to find a replacement.

These days life has too often become about judging people as winners or losers. But it's more than that. It's about how one treats outcomes with equanimity. Lancaster has demonstrated he's a man of honour.

**David Rimmer**  
Hertford Heath, Herts

## THE RW POLL

Who should be England's captain in the Six Nations? Here's what you think...



## One-eyed reporting

Stephen Jones may be 'rugby's most outspoken and influential journalist', but he's also the most selective in his use of facts (*The Love Affair is Over*, Dec issue). He knowingly avoids any mention of successful cross-coders such as Brad Thorn, Stephen Myler, Chris Ashton and the ten in the recent World Cup teams, including SB Williams, Craig Wing, Israel Folau and Nehe Milner-Skudder.

But then their success ruins his argument.

**David Hancock**  
Witney, Oxfordshire

## Tickets are too dear

When will it end? Every year for the past 11 years, I've attended the English Premiership final and this year yet again the ticket →



# INTOUCH

→ prices are ridiculous for what's still a club game. When will the greed end?

We must stop this silly pricing of tickets and get the ordinary person on the street back supporting rugby, or it will just become an elite sport.

**Bryn Scourfield**

*Lindfield, West Sussex*

**RW says:** Tickets for the final start at £30 for adults. Do other readers view that as excessive?

## A breath of fresh air

I'm a season-ticket holder at Port Vale FC but a few weeks back I went to see Sale. I was hooked! The game, fans, sportsmanship, respect, community feel.

Everything! Then there was the World Cup. Exciting games, sportsmanship, respect for referees and players, respect between fans. Everything!

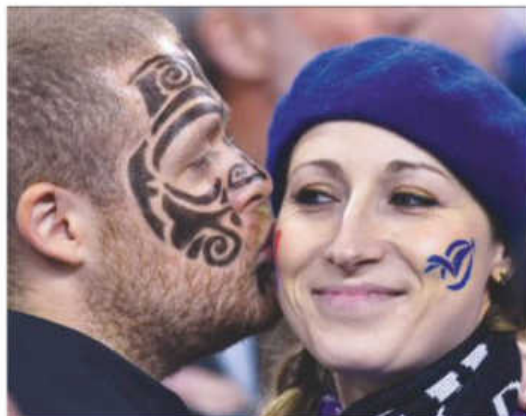
Then I bought your magazine. As a teacher, the article on mixed-ability rugby inspired me. The whole rugby experience has been a breath of fresh air.

**Simon Davies**

*Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs*

## Why is law ignored?

Referees seem an approachable bunch, so I'd love to ask them why they choose to ignore the law requiring the ball to be put into a scrum straight. This often happens after the ref



▲ **Making new friends** The World Cup was an eye opener for one reader

has crouched to get a good view – the ball sometimes goes in at about 45 degrees, yet the offence goes unpunished. Shortly after we often see a lineout, slightly crooked, correctly penalised.

The scrum is such an important part of the game and it's ludicrous that referees can decide to ignore one of its laws.

**Dennis Spindler**

*Petersfield RFC, Hampshire*

**RW says:** Crooked feeds, collapses, penalties... sadly, the modern scrum has a lot to answer for.

## RWC best & worst

My World Cup highlights were the bonus-point system (the Six Nations needs this), Japan, knowledgeable and neutral TV commentary, Sandy Park (what an atmosphere) and Nigel Owens and most of his referee colleagues.

Less pleasing were the shocking squint feeds, football stadiums (what was wrong with Welford Road?) and banning bagpipes.

Funny moments? TV's Samsung/Jack Whitehall adverts. And sad? The poor orangutan in the SSE adverts, you've gotta feel sorry for the lonely beast.

**Mike George, Edinburgh**

▼ **Pat on the back** Viewers liked TV's Nick Mullins and Ben Kay



## CALLING RUGBY FANS!

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▲ **Feeding time** Australia's Nick Phipps prepares to put the ball into a scrum v Fiji – hopefully down the middle!

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# 5 Questions for EDDIE JONES

*Rugby World* pinpoints the big issues facing England's new head coach ahead of his first Six Nations campaign

## 1 Who's England captain?

Chris Robshaw's four-year reign as England skipper has been dogged by criticism and Jones has previously said that he doesn't see the Harlequins flanker as an out-and-out openside but more of a six-and-a-half.

So who are the other options? The first rule for any captain is that he has to be assured of his place in the team – and there are few players who can currently say that. Wasps lock Joe Launchbury is one of them and if Dylan Hartley finds his form after a spell out with concussion he could be reinstalled as England hooker.

Elsewhere there is too much doubt and it will certainly be interesting to see who Jones plumps for – a squad veteran or a youngster he wants to build the team around.

## 2 Who's in the back-room team?

This will be top of Jones's to-do list this month. He plans to sit down with Andy Farrell, Graham Rowntree and Mike Catt to decide whether they will continue as part of the set-up but it's doubtful that he'll keep them en bloc, if any at all.

He could be tempted to bring in coaches on a part-time basis, as southern hemisphere teams often do. So Rob Baxter and Jim Mallinder, say, would remain in their roles at Exeter and Northampton, but be involved with England during the Six Nations.

This would allow Jones to gauge who he likes working with before committing to full-time roles and it ticks the succession planning box – there's bound to be criticism if he

doesn't include any English coaches. However, that sort of plan would need negotiations between the RFU and Premiership clubs, which takes us on nicely to the next question...

## 3 How will he manage the club versus country situation?

One of Stuart Lancaster's biggest achievements was rebuilding a relationship between England and the Premiership clubs after fractious periods during previous regimes.

For Jones to be successful, he needs to keep the clubs on side, so visiting all the directors of rugby will be one of his first priorities.

He's said previously that he wants control of England players but central contracts seem unlikely given the power and financial clout of the English clubs. So it all comes down to working together. And with a new elite player agreement to be thrashed out this season, he will need to keep the clubs on side or the players will once again become unwitting pawns in a club-versus-country row.

He will have earned early brownie points, though, for insisting that if players want to be picked for England they need to be playing in England, thus setting out his stall regarding those based in France.

## 4 Are results more important than development?

It's the age-old debate: do you sacrifice results for long-term



WITH JAPAN, JONES'S  
TACTICS SUITED HIS  
PLAYERS' STRENGTHS

▼ Lock stock rising  
Joe Launchbury is a  
captaincy contender

gains or simply go all out to win matches? The end goal is for England to win the 2019 World Cup in Japan, so many would argue that Jones should spend the next four years building a team to do that, discarding players who won't be around in four years.

But after this morale-destroying World Cup campaign, is picking the best team to win matches, rebuild confidence and generate momentum a better approach? Ideally he'd do both – but it's not usually that easy!







## 5 What style will England play?

Here's a final conundrum for Jones: does he pick a game plan that suits the best players in England or does he pick players who suit the game plan he wants to play?

The former is more likely. With Japan, his tactics suited his players' strengths. Jones has a host of young, exciting backs at his disposal as well as powerful forwards, so if he can combine the traditional elements of the English forward game with an

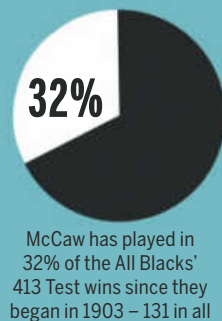
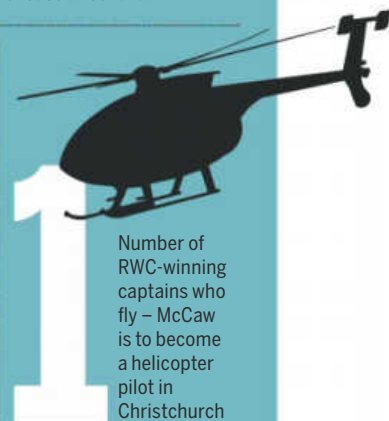
inventive attacking style he should hit on a winning combination.

He also needs to consider the role of openside. For the past few years England have played without a genuine ball-winner at seven, relying on the strengths of Dan Cole and Launchbury at the breakdown to balance things out, but the World Cup highlighted the importance of fetchers in the back row. So who will he plump for in that No 7 shirt?

Plenty for Jones to ponder. **rw**

## McCAW IN NUMBERS

### The BREAKDOWN





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## NEW ZEALAND PROP JOE MOODY

# “Ma’a Nonu jumped out with a Scream mask on”



PICS: OFFSIDE &amp; REUTERS/ACTION IMAGES

**How does it feel to be a world champion?** It still hasn't sunk in yet, but it's pretty huge to think we've been crowned world champions. And away from home in the UK!

**Tell us about the celebrations back in New Zealand...** Airport staff were on the tarmac doing the haka before we'd even stepped off the plane. Then walking into the airport was unreal; the place was packed with fans welcoming us home. The parades in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch were huge. It was humbling to see what our achievement meant to everyone.

**What were your RWC highlights?** I wasn't in the original 31-man squad and came in for the quarters as injury cover, so to be named to start in the final was huge for me. Off the pitch, it

would be having my dad, uncle and girlfriend flying over at short notice.

**What's the funniest thing you've seen on the pitch?** I got down-trou'ed in a maul and it collapsed with an opposition player's face fully between my cheeks! There's a pic of it floating around somewhere – I was the 'butt' of a few jokes for a while.

**Who are the jokers in the NZ squad?** Sam Cane has an endless supply of jokes, some good, some not so good.



Golden girl Jennifer Aniston is a "babe"

▲ **Toasting success**  
Joe Moody (right) and Sam Whitelock with the Webb Ellis Cup

**Any practical jokes you can tell us about?** We were walking back to Ben Smith's room one night to play cards and Ma'a Nonu jumped out from under the staircase with a Scream mask on. Big Brodie Retallick went as stiff as a board and Sam Cane got the fright of his life. It cracked me up!

**Do you have any phobias?** I hate to say it, but I can't stand spiders.

**Superstitions?** Whistling at night is a no-no. In Maori culture, it's supposed to bring back bad spirits.

**Embarrassing moment?** There are a lot to choose from! How about not knowing the royal's name when he presented us with our (World Cup) medals? I just said, "G'day, mate."

**Who'd you like to be stuck in a lift with?** Jennifer Aniston. She's a babe and I reckon she'd have good chat. I like a gal who can make me laugh.

**Who would be your three dream dinner party guests?** Michael Jordan – I've looked up to him since I was a kid. Alan Jackson (country singer) – my favourite musician. I'm unsure of a third – probably my dad.

**Who would play you in a film of your life?** Gosh, I dunno... You'd have to say Brad Pitt, wouldn't you? Could he grow a bushy beard though?

**How would you like to be remembered?** Not for the down-trou incident, that's for sure!

**What's your guilty pleasure?** Well, this is embarrassing – probably that very addictive girly TV show *Revenge*. It's got me hooked.

**Do you have any surprising hidden talents?** I can spin a basketball on my finger and do a few tricks. Oh, and I was also a pretty handy wrestler back in the day. Proper freestyle wrestling, not WWF style!

**What would you like to achieve outside of rugby?** I'm a farm boy – that's where my passion lies. My long-term goal is to run my own farm. 🐄

## THE FACTS JOE MOODY

Age 27 (18 Sep 1988)  
Born Christchurch  
Franchise Crusaders  
Position Prop  
Height 6ft 2in  
Weight 17st 8lb  
NZ caps 11  
NZ points Five (1T)



# #ChampionsCup

We asked which players and teams have shone in Europe. Here are your views from social media



**@Rob\_Whitefield** The whole Ospreys squad. Very few teams go to Clermont, score 4 tries, get within 5 points and leave with 2 BPs

**David Robinson** Kieran Brookes. Carry on playing like he is, he'll be England's tighthead for years. Wasps get the team award!

**myles\_rugbyknowledge** Both Nathan Hughes and George Smith have been outstanding for Wasps

**duncnimmo** Saracens destroying Ulster in Belfast and Wasps beating Toulon stood out – what an achievement!

**@AsherRoxon** Nick Auterac (left). Huge in the tight for Bath and doesn't shy away from contact. Awaiting a call from Eddie Jones

**@Nickorando** Wasps and Tigers – great bonus-point wins with great style against top French clubs, despite bad refing

**Peter Guerin** George Smith is such a natural player. Knows when to get involved and contest ball. Dominate the breakdown

**@Alinash** Wasps have been standout team so far. For back2back wins against Leinster and Toulon and the manner of victory

**Nick Bolton** Ospreys. On a tiny comparative budget yet they scored four tries and came within five points of Clermont

## SHORT PASS

### LEWSEY LEAVES

Former England full-back Josh Lewsey is to leave his position as head of rugby at the WRU in January.

### WAIKATO CLASH

Wales will play the Waikato Chiefs (right) during their tour of New Zealand in the summer. The Hamilton game is set for 14 June, between Wales' first and second Tests against the All Blacks.

### CHIEFS IN THE MONEY

Exeter say they're one of "three or four" Premiership clubs to declare a profit for the past financial year, the Chiefs making £900,000.



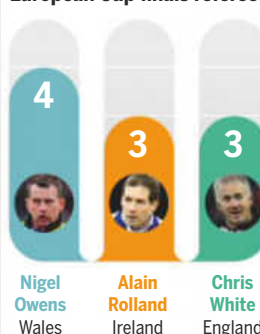
### FRENCH CONNECTIONS

Scottish lock Richie Gray will leave Castres at the end of the season to join Toulouse. Wales lock Luke Charteris will swap Racing for Bath.

### TAIONE SEVERS TIES

Epi Taione has stepped down as president and chairman of Tongan rugby, citing disparities in the level of funding they receive from World Rugby as his reason.

### European Cup finals refereed



### ANALYSE THIS

Tomasi Cama, Sevens Player of the Year in 2012, has retired but will rejoin New Zealand Sevens – men and women – as an analyst.

### BANNED FOR BLUES

Cardiff Blues' Matthew Rees received a seven-week ban after stamping on Nick Easter during a Challenge Cup clash. The hooker's free to play again on 11 January.



# JOHN MITCHELL

THE FORMER BACK-ROWER WHO COACHED THE ALL BLACKS AT THE 2003 WORLD CUP



## “Jonah was at peace in the All Blacks jersey”

I RECENTLY SAW a photo of the honours board at the New Zealand Rugby headquarters in Wellington. It showed Jonah Lomu as All Black No 941 and myself above, at 940. Needless to say, the gap between us when it came to pace and power was much bigger than that. I took part in the All Blacks trials in 1994 ahead of the Test series against France. I flew there on a small aeroplane that felt like it was tilting to one side. When we landed and I saw the 18-year-old Lomu walking off the plane, I understood why.

Through the leadership and guidance of former All Blacks coach Laurie Mains, and the strong personalities of those who were in the squad at the time, Jonah went on to star at the 1995 World Cup in South Africa. He became rugby's first global superstar and played a part in the game becoming professional – the breakaway rebel league that was being touted was partly because of what he had achieved in South Africa. He was as well known outside of New Zealand as he was inside the country.

I was fortunate to have played with and against Jonah and then, as coach, I selected him for New Zealand's 2001 end-of-year tour and he was brilliant. Against Ireland, he made several of the strong in-to-out runs that he became so famous for. He broke the line often against Scotland and scored in a tough match against Argentina. I remember how fans would walk past someone like Richie McCaw and make a beeline for Jonah.


However, he didn't enjoy the greatest Super 12 campaign in 2002. I met with him to discuss his performances and we also put him through some aerobic drills. He fatigued early, after 15 minutes or so, and the drop-off in performance compared to his previous measurements was considerable. The All Blacks played Fiji that June and an unknown winger went around Jonah to score. I remember coming into the changing room after and he was sitting, still in his kit, looking bewildered. I told the coaching group we still had a lot of work to do with Jonah, mentally.

I told him I was taking him on the 2002 tour based on reputation, not recent performances. I made it clear that he had to lift his performance if he wanted to be selected for the 2003 World Cup squad. Of course, I didn't know at the time about Jonah's serious health issues; otherwise I'd have been more compassionate.

At half-time in the match against Wales on that tour, Jonah experienced double vision which we presumed was because of concussion. We told him to go back on the field and see how he went, and if he struggled we'd take him off, which is what happened. That would prove to be the end of his tour. I recall walking past his room later that night. His door was open, which we encouraged as a team to improve communication, and I saw Jonah vomiting violently into a bucket, with our medical team in support.

After that tour, I travelled to Manchester to visit some friends and I picked up the newspaper to see that Jonah was in a hospital 18 miles away. I went to visit him and got the fright of my life when I saw this 262lb, 6ft 5in winger lying on a hospital bed with tubes hanging out of him. He had his manager, family and friends with him.

Jonah would never play for the All Blacks again. It's incredibly sad that his Test career ended on a low note, because he was such a special player. He was an open book in terms of the challenges he faced early in his life and those he wrestled with as a celebrity. I only wish I could have helped him continue to excel, as he was always at peace in the All Blacks jersey – it was his happy place.

Rest in peace Jonah Tali Lomu. Thank you for being you, and for all the wonderful memories. 

● *Jonah Lomu won 63 caps for New Zealand from 1994-2002. He died aged 40 on 18 November 2015.*

▼ **One last hurrah**  
Jonah's final Test, played against Wales



PICS: GETTY IMAGES & INPHO

# HOTSHOTS

Meet two teens who are cutting their Pro12 teeth and preparing for the U20 Six Nations



PICS: HUI EVANS AGENCY & INPHO

## SAM ARNOLD ULSTER

AGE 19 COUNTRY IRELAND POSITION CENTRE



**When did you start playing?** When I was six, at Cranbrook rugby club in Kent. I lived near Tunbridge Wells.

**Which other rugby clubs have you played for?** Tunbridge Wells, then Harlequins from when I was 13 to 17. As soon as I left school I moved to Belfast to join Ulster.

**What's your Irish connection?** My mum, Jackie, and her parents come from Wexford. They wanted me to go down the Irish route so I played Ireland Clubs U18, then Ireland U20 last season. It was awesome.

**Have you played different positions?** I started as centre, played scrum-half for a year when I was 16, then moved back to centre.

**What interests do you have outside rugby?** I'm trying to play golf but I'm not very good. It's a work in progress!

**Who's had a big influence on you?** My coach at Cranleigh School, Andy

Houston. The senior players at Ulster, like Paul Marshall, Ian Humphreys, Andrew Trimble and Tommy Bowe, have been so helpful.

**Describe your playing style...** I like using my speed and footwork so I can beat the first defender and get us on the front foot. I look for mismatches.

**How has it been playing in the Guinness Pro12 last year and this?**

It was strange to start with, playing against and with players I've seen on TV. I was aiming to play during the World Cup but didn't think I'd get as much game time as I did.

**What are your aims now?** Neil Doak (Ulster head coach) has given me some work-ons and I want to perform well in all my games and really get my foot in the door at Ulster, and play more for Ireland U20 too.

▲ **Breaking through**  
Ulster's Sam Arnold attracts two defenders



Every player featured as a Rugby World Hotshot will receive a one-year subscription to the magazine. If you have any Hotshot nominations, then please email [rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com](mailto:rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com)

## RW VERDICT

Arnold took the brave step of moving far away from home when he'd just turned 18 and it's paying off as he's making an impact in the Ulster team. He will certainly add to his ten Ireland U20 caps this spring.

## DILLON LEWIS CARDIFF BLUES

AGE 19 COUNTRY WALES POSITION PROP



**How did you get into rugby?** My father, Tony, took me to Pontypridd minis when I was eight. He was a huge influence and coached my team until I was 13.

**What positions have you played?** I was second-row, then No 8 when I was 14 or 15, then got asked to move to tighthead after a Blues U16 trial.

**How did you manage the move?**

I was quite open to the idea and Chris Horsman helped me with my scrummaging a lot in the Wales age groups. I learnt a lot in my first year of senior rugby with Pontypridd last season, against older players.

**Did you mostly play for Pontypridd last season?** Yes. I started the SWALEC Cup and Principality

Premiership finals, which was a good experience. I was in the Blues Academy but trained with the seniors and I had about 20 minutes off the bench against Wasps in the LV= Cup. That was a big step up.

**How was your Guinness Pro12 debut in October?** I only got on for a couple of minutes against Munster but it was great to be involved.

**What are your aims for this season?** I was hoping to make an impact through pre-season and have an opportunity (for Blues) somewhere along the line, but I didn't expect it to happen as soon as October.

The primary thing I'm working on is my scrummaging, because that's the main job for a tighthead, but I like to play a bit more open rugby when I can, with the ball in hand.

## RW VERDICT

This product of Pontypridd minis and schools already has ten Wales U20 caps, yet doesn't turn 20 until January. He got game time in both the Blues' European games last month, and has a bright future.



# “Come on Bakkies, just give me a little kiss goodbye”


PICS: GETTY IMAGES & PAUL ROBINSON

# V

ICTOR MATFIELD puckers up to give Bakkies Botha a kiss after their final game together last month,

for the Barbarians against Argentina. But what might the pair be saying?

Write a caption of no more than 20 words, mark it 'January Caption Comp' and email it to [rugbyworldcompetitions@timeinc.com](mailto:rugbyworldcompetitions@timeinc.com). Or write to the editorial address on P14. Please include your name and address. The closing date is Friday 15 January.

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## “I thought I had the balls, but now I think I’ve just got the willies”

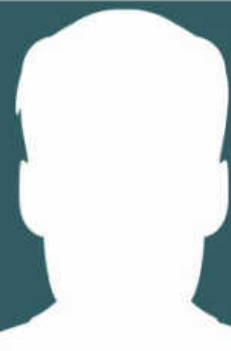


### LAST MONTH'S WINNER

There were lots of entries about footballers' diving, but Paul Sutton, from Milton Keynes, got the nod for his caption of this pic of Austin Healey and Jimmy Bullard.

# THE SECRET PLAYER

THIS FORMER INTERNATIONAL GIVES US A UNIQUE INSIGHT INTO THE PRO GAME



## “Inside every pro lives a full-on Brit Abroad”

# A

SOON as the pools are announced for the European Cup, each club can pretty much predict their eventual position. Deep down, players know where they sit in the natural order when it comes to the serious business of European rugby. Week

to week in your domestic league, you've got a bit of breathing room; a home loss isn't necessarily going to knacker your whole season. It's a different story in Europe, and if you are drawn alongside certain teams you are pretty much guaranteed an early bath.

Some sides seemed to work out the mysterious magic formula for doing well in Europe long ago whilst others, no matter how much money they spend or how well they go year after year in their own league, never quite acquire the knack. The European heavyweights may even spend the rest of their season looking decidedly mediocre, but on cup weekends they are transformed.

The likelihood is you don't play for one of those clubs, seeing as only six different teams have won the thing in the past 15 years. If so, you make your way through Europe more in hope than expectation. Those hopes are bound to be dashed at some point, but if you do get off to a bad start, the European Cup can quickly become a dispiriting experience. At best, you'll spend the campaign scrabbling around for enough points to scrape into the quarters as highest-placed runner-up, at worst you'll be praying for an away win in Treviso or Newport to avoid the shame of finishing bottom of the log.

Still, no matter what your status in Europe, each cup weekend provides a highlight in a long season. The romance of it all is enough to make you come over a bit Eddie Butler – different countries, exotic opposition – although there is still a strong chance you will be drawn with at least one team from your own league, and yet another Friday night game in Llanelli or Sale doesn't quite get the juices flowing like a trip to Toulon or Bordeaux.

Of course, those long away trips are all business, but you can't help looking forward to the ancillary benefit of a bit of French winter sun when you first see the fixture list. As well as some decent pre- and post-match food. I'm considering compiling a Michelin-style guide to the best catered clubhouses across Europe as, sad but true, these are the crucial details that stick in a rugby player's mind, long after the memory of the match itself has faded. You have to take your comfort where you can find it during the slog of the season, and almost any veteran



▲ **Business trip**  
Cardiff Blues take on  
Calvisano in Brescia

pro will glaze over at the thought of the fine wine and oysters at Montpellier or the osso buco at Zebre.

European away trips can take on a stag do-ish feel once the official part of the weekend is over – generally after a humping if you are on French soil – with the boys intent on making the most of a night away from the family or the censure of their own fans. As on any good stag do, the evening will often end in damage to public property and the possibility of a night under the hospitality of *les gendarmes*. Inside every pro sportsman lives a full-on Brit Abroad just dying to come out to play. I remember two trips where players only just made the plane home after having their release from the clink frantically negotiated by the team manager in best schoolboy French.

But for a mid-season break without the pressure of anyone actually giving a toss if you win or not – your own coaches included – you need to get yourself down into the Challenge Cup. An away trip in that competition gives you a couple of days away from the norm broken up by a spot of rugby to get the flight out of the legs.

It also give you the chance to visit a few more obscure places where you would never otherwise end up. This can be a good thing. For example, La Rochelle: delightful. On the other hand, there is a reason you never hear about any of your friends going on a mini-break to Bucharest; it is unrelentingly grim. The only other Brits you bump into out there are a 'certain type' of male, middle-aged divorcee and stag dos on a serious budget. In short, it is the perfect place for a mid-season jolly. **ew**



# Ahead of the game

The Scots are trialling a quick new concussion test

**W**HEN HOWE OF FIFE physio Lianne Brunton came across the King-Devick test, it was as if a light bulb went on, writes *Richard Bath*. Working on a thesis on concussion for her masters in sport and exercise medicine at Glasgow University, she realised the test being used for a pitchside diagnosis of concussion in American Football was perfect for rugby.

"The beauty of the King-Devick test is that it's so quick and easy," says Brunton. "The average time to do the test – which consists of three cards with numbers on which you say as fast as you can – is 42.7 seconds. It's stored as an App on my iPad, so I can use it pitchside and it takes less than two minutes. It's certainly faster than the SCAT3 test, which takes players off the pitch for at least ten minutes."

Scottish rugby has been a leader in diagnosing and treating concussion, with its 'If in doubt, sit them out' campaign widely adhered to. So when Brunton, who works with ex-Scotland and Lions physio Stuart Barton, persuaded Howe of Fife to trial the App, it was seen as bolstering current measures and is being followed closely by SRU team doctor James Robson.

The club is the first in Europe to use the test. The first stage is for all 300 players at the club to do the test at rest, to establish a 'baseline' time.



**Leading light**  
Physio Lianne Brunton saw the test's potential

Under game conditions, research has shown that players complete the test faster than their baseline, so if their response is slower, they're deemed to be concussed.

"The test is particularly good for instances where a player might have had two or three small knocks and might not think they're concussed," says Brunton. "In fact, research has found that the test has detected concussions the SCAT3 test missed."

"It doesn't have to be conducted by a medically qualified person either, so the plan is for all 19 coaches at the club to have an iPad. It's a really good tool for reassuring parents that you're doing all you can to make the game as safe as possible." **RW**



PICS: GETTY IMAGES, HOW EVANS AGENCY & INFO

▲ **Testing time** Referee Nigel Owens sends Clermont's Jamie Cudmore for a Head Injury Assessment



## Ken Owens

The Scarlets and Wales hooker Ken Owens gives us an insight into his life

### FUNNIEST TEAM-MATE

► I could say James Davies (right) but I'm not going to boost his ego. Instead, I'll say Bradley Davies. He has his own line in humour simply because you never know what's going to come out of his mouth. He's crazy.



### DREAM OCCUPATION

▲ I would like to be a politician. I started a politics degree at university but never ended up finishing it. I'm interested in current affairs.



### CHILDHOOD HEROES

◀ A couple of boys from Carmarthen, Delme Thomas (left) and Roy Bergiers. Just growing up and seeing what they'd achieved with Wales and the Lions was a huge inspiration to me.



### TOUGHEST OPPONENT

► Rory Best. Rory is as hard as nails and very experienced. You think you're getting the better of him and suddenly you're flat on your back, thinking: "How did he do that?"



**Wales**  
**Cymru**

### BEST HOLIDAY

◀ I'm not too fussy. We went to the Caribbean last year but now we have a young son, Efan, we'll stay a little more local. Somewhere like Bluestone, or anywhere quiet in West Wales.

# A feast of festive fixtures

**E**XACTLY SEVEN years after Quins uncorked their first Big Game in front of a then Premiership record crowd of 50,000 at Twickenham, the 2015 vintage of this fine festive tippie will be served on 27 December, with Gloucester guests for the first time.

Leicester were the first team to take on Harlequins in a Big Game, and the spoils were shared with a 26-26 draw in 2008. Since then, Quins have won three and lost three showpieces at Twickenham, with Northampton Saints proving to be ungrateful party guests last year, winning 30-25.

For three of the past four years the stadium has been full to its 82,000 capacity and vast swathes of the ground were already sold out for this year's clash with Gloucester before the start of December. Log onto [tickets.quins.co.uk](http://tickets.quins.co.uk) to get yours.

The first Big Game also saw Harlequins wearing a one-off pink kit in aid of Cancer Research and for Big Game Eight the charity partner is the Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, for whom Quins are aiming to raise £100,000.

## ON THE ROAD

The Big Game on 27 December (4.30pm) is arguably the pick of the festive fixtures in the Premiership, but Wasps v Saracens on the same day (2pm) could rival it, such is each side's form. Supporters and players from other clubs who might have hoped for shorter journeys than usual



Derbies Zebre play Treviso back-to-back

on the Christmas and New Year weekends would have been disappointed, as there is no local flavour in the other fixtures – in fact, Sale must travel to Exeter Chiefs on 26 December (3pm) and Bath go to Newcastle on 2 January (3pm).

## SCOTTISH SILVERWARE

There's a trophy to play for in Scotland as Glasgow attempt to wrest the 1872 Cup from Edinburgh.

The first leg of the double header is at BT Murrayfield on 27 December (3.05pm), then the Warriors entertain Edinburgh on 2 January (5.15pm).

## GLASGOW WILL TRY TO WREST THE 1872 CUP FROM EDINBURGH

It's worth getting along to both legs if you can, as Edinburgh proved it's possible to turn the outcome on its head as they lost 16-6 at Scotstoun last year, then won 20-8 at Murrayfield to claim the trophy.

## COUNTRY COUSINS

The rest of the Guinness Pro12 also have local derbies, with Ireland's four provinces going head-to-head, Benetton Treviso and Zebre playing home and away on consecutive weekends, and the four Welsh regions squaring up to each other.

The first Pro12 fixture of 2016 is Ospreys v Dragons on 1 January at 2pm, with Cardiff Blues v Scarlets following three hours later – a grand way to start a new year. **rw**

● See pages 30-31 for all the fixtures.



No entry  
Finn Russell is halted by Edinburgh

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### BARRY MURPHY

AGE 32 POSITION CENTRE/WING CLUB MUNSTER IRELAND CAPS FOUR

**I've always played music.** Throughout my rugby career it was a way to switch off and a group of us started playing in a pub in Limerick.

**It all fell into place for us to form a band, Hermitage Green.** I had to retire, one

lad finished his PhD, another took a break from teaching, so we decided to give it a go and write our own stuff.

**We were fortunate to build a following via YouTube.** We got into it in 2011, posting on there and Facebook.

**We managed ourselves at the start.** We recorded a live album and it got to No 1 on iTunes. Then this year we signed a deal with Sony.

**We did 500 gigs in four years.** There's Irish people all over the world, so we've gigged all over the world! We did one gig in Stellenbosch, just outside Cape Town, with a local tribe on the drums.



Barry's island  
Murphy on stage

**I do miss rugby.** I miss the lads and the dressing room. Music is quite similar, but it's not the same buzz.

**The lifestyle's different.** I'm drinking less protein shakes and more whisky!

**I still see the Munster lads.** We all live in Limerick and I train there with guys like Ian Dowling and Jerry Flannery.



# JAMES HORWILL

THE FORMER AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN AND LOCK NOW PLAYING WITH HARLEQUINS



## “Anyone turning up to the Big Game should expect a good spectacle of running rugby”

**I** HAVE BEEN here at Quins for just over two months and it has been great. I've felt that I've fitted in really well. The guys have been very welcoming, the players and all of the staff have really made my transition easy – and I've enjoyed it so far.

There's a good vibe around the club. I wasn't too sure of what happened with the club's performances last year, but to be honest I'm not worried about that. What I was worried about was starting well with this group. Everyone who has played in the Premiership before has told me that it's a long season where you have to keep getting better.

It's been a little bit of them telling me what to expect and leaving me to it, but it has been great. The boys keep telling me the weather won't always be so good! I also think this year might be a little bit different from normal because of the World Cup changing the schedule. It's probably a bit more intense than previous years when you had little breaks throughout the year, with Internationals.

Coming over to the northern hemisphere, I knew this was part of the challenge of playing in a new tournament and pitching myself at a different level. That's part of why

I joined Quins. So now we have to focus on the big games before Christmas and then *the* Big Game just after, against Gloucester at Twickenham on 27 December.

The guys have spoken to me about the Big Games, that it's something the club have been building on and that this is the eighth one. It's clearly built momentum over the last few years and when you get a club game with more than 80,000 people that makes news around the world. So if we can get the same this year that would be fantastic. Any time you play in front of a big crowd, whether for club or country, it's a huge occasion. Especially at Twickenham – it's a great stadium that I love to play at.


It will be a little bit different for me this time. We'll probably be in the home sheds, which I've never experienced before. But that's the beauty of it. We're growing the brand that is Harlequins and it's an internationally recognised brand, not just for rugby people. Charity is also an important part of the game. Quins are a club who are very conscious of the social impact they can have. It's great we can do that, especially in London, with so many people we can possibly help.

There are certainly talented players at Quins. It surprised me how young some of these guys are. I didn't

go around introducing myself and asking how old everyone was, but it's great to see so many young guys who are already established footballers.

I'm here to help and hopefully bring ideas. I played in the southern hemisphere for the Reds for 13 seasons, so I know there are different ways to do things. It's good to bounce ideas off people.

Each Premiership team clearly has their own style, but the cornerstones are still the same. Set-piece is critical up here and teams with a good set-piece tend to perform well.

Quins have a real identity. It doesn't matter who we're playing, we always want to run with the ball and have a crack. It's something I certainly enjoy. Now, we don't want to be entertaining and lose. But it's important to keep playing with our style and we'll approach each game with that sense and then alter it depending on who we play. So anyone turning up to the Big Game should expect a good spectacle of running rugby. We are certainly not going to die wondering! 

**Explosive match**  
Scenes from last year's  
Big Game v Saints



PICS: GETTY IMAGES, INFO & TARA STANNHOPE

# Wanted: women's kit

Kit manufacturers are missing a trick by ignoring the women's market. Taylor Heyman gets shirt

**T**HE RFU is on a drive to encourage 10,000 more women to start playing contact rugby by 2017. But what will they all wear? The RFU are pumping funding into the women's game and England Women's 2014 World Cup stars are helping to run 'Pitch Up and Play' events across the country. Campaigns like 'This Girl Can' are increasing grass-roots participation, but women are struggling to find the kit they need for their first game.

Let's start with the high street. Go to any sportswear shop and ask for women's rugby boots. After the assistant recovers from their shock, they'll offer a pair of kids' or men's boots. Although adequate to play in, they aren't designed for women.

It's a similar story with the rest of the gear. Pads and shorts for children or men are not really suitable for women because they're designed for a totally different body shape. They are too baggy or ride up around the chest or hips.

There are more options online if you look hard enough. Google 'women's rugby kit' and you'll find a vast range of supporter wear, a few pairs of general tracksuit bottoms, but rarely any kit you need to get started. The stuff that is out there is too expensive for the average beginner to afford, especially as they need to purchase all of the essential items at once.



PICT: ACTION IMAGES & OFFSIDE

## THEY HAVE TO OPT FOR MEN'S KITS THAT SUFFOCATE THE FORWARDS

New recruits need inexpensive options and a range of kit to choose from. Just as different positions on the pitch require varying types of kit, different sexes require it too.

At least one area is improving. Team kits are becoming more woman-friendly, offering a variety of sizes and shapes for women's bodies. Unfortunately, poorer clubs are struggling to afford these kits and

have to opt for men's kits that suffocate the forwards and billow in the wind on the backs. Perhaps the RFU could give specialist kit grants as part of their funding drive to help out.

Within rugby, the women's game and its players are finally beginning to get the respect they deserve. Retailers need to follow suit, creating quality kit for them. Surely this would prove lucrative for the company that hits the market first? **RW**

### HAVE YOUR SAY

What gets your goat? Let us know on Facebook or by tweeting @rugbyworldmag

## HOT TOPIC

### THIS MONTH MOBILE HOMES

After playing Uruguay in Manchester, England said they'd consider playing some home Tests away from Twickenham. So should England, and the other home nations, take to the road to help grow the game? Here's what you thought...

Yes, just to get away from Twickenham Man. You know, the ones in wax cotton who played 'rugger' at school sometime last century.  
**@SimonJackson702**

Will never happen, RFU want the money at Twickenham.  
**Jon-Michael Foxall**

Living in Cumbria, my World Cup highlight was seeing



Warm welcome  
Fans in Manchester

England in Manchester even with nothing to play for. Great atmosphere. **Ennenspete**

England make £10m playing at Twickenham, £3m from Manchester. **Mike Driver**

Don't think Wales could move around due to lack of grounds. **@CJR587**

Ireland, Scotland, France and Italy do this. It helps engage with fans. **@FinMorrison**

Need to keep up momentum from World Cup. Play one game a year in Manchester or Newcastle. **@RobSutton22**

St James' Park has proved an amazing rugby venue. Living in N-East means nightmare travel to Twickenham. **ctizzy5**

Not if there isn't another stadium that accommodates 82,000 fans. Hard enough to get a ticket as it is!  
**Martyn Duffey**





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#scoresomemanpoints



# THE DIRECTORY

SAT 5 DEC

## Aviva Premiership

Harlequins v Lon Irish (3pm)  
Worcester v Leicester (3pm)  
Bath v Northampton (3.15)

TV Live on BT Sport

Wasps v Exeter (5.30pm)

TV Live on BT Sport

## Guinness Pro12

Treviso v Scarlets (2pm)  
Glasgow v Leinster (3pm)

TV Live on Sky Sports

## Top 14

Castres v Montpellier  
La Rochelle v Grenoble  
Stade Français v Bordeaux

Toulon v Agen  
Toulouse v Oyonnax

## GK IPA Championship

Bedford v Doncaster  
Lon Scottish v Rotherham  
Lon Welsh v Cornish Pirates

## Principality Premiership

Bedwas v Carmarthen  
Cardiff v Aberavon  
Cross Keys v Llandovery

Ebbw Vale v Bridgend  
Newport v Neath

Pontypridd v Llanelli

## Ulster Bank League 1A

Ballynahinch v Lansdowne  
Clontarf v Garryowen  
Cork Con v Terenure College

UCD v Old Belvedere

Young Munster v Galwegians

## BT Premiership

Currie v Hawick  
Gala v Melrose  
Heriot's v Glasgow Hawks

Selkirk v Boroughmuir

Stirling County v Ayr

SUN 6 DEC

## Aviva Premiership

Newcastle v Saracens (3pm)

TV Live on BT Sport

## Guinness Pro12

Zebre v Ospreys (2pm)

Dragons v Munster (2.30)

TV Live on S4C

## Top 14

Brive v Clermont Auvergne

THU 10 DEC

## Varsity Matches

Oxford v Cambridge Women  
(11.30am, Twickenham)

Oxford v Cambridge Men  
(2.30pm, Twickenham)

TV Both live on BBC

## European Challenge Cup

P4 Worcester v Glos (7.45)

TV Live on Sky Sports

P5 Agen v Grenoble (7.45)

FRI 11 DEC

## European Champions Cup

P1 Ulster v Toulouse (7.45)

TV Live on BT Sport

## European Challenge Cup

P1 Connacht v N'castle (7.45)

P3 C Blues v M'pellier (7.30)

P4 La Rochelle v Zebre (7)

## British & Irish Cup

Bristol v Bedford

Leinster A v Ealing

Munster A v Ospreys Select

WEEKEND 12-13 DEC

## HSBC World Sevens Series

(Cape Town)

TV Both live on BT Sport

## European Challenge Cup

P1 Enisei v Brive (10am)

P2 Dragons v Pau (2.30pm)

Castres v Sale (7.45pm)

P3 Calvisano v Quins (1.30)

P5 Lon Irish v Edinburgh (3)

## British & Irish Cup

Connacht Eagles v Jersey

Doncaster v Dragons Select

London Welsh v Nottingham

Moseley v Rotherham

Scarlets Select v Ulster A

## BT Premiership

Ayr v Heriot's

FRI 18 DEC

## European Champions Cup

P3 N'ampton v Racing (7.45)

TV Live on BT Sport

## European Challenge Cup

P5 Grenoble v Agen (6.30)

Edinburgh v Lon Irish (7.30)

SAT 19 DEC

## European Champions Cup

P1 Saracens v Oyonnax (1)

TV Live on Sky Sports

P2 B'deaux v Ospreys (5.15)

TV Live on Sky Sports

P3 Scarlets v Glasgow (7.45)

TV Live on BT Sport

## BT Premiership

Currie v Ayr

Hawick v Boroughmuir

Heriot's v Melrose

Selkirk v Glasgow Hawks

Stirling County v Gala

SUN 20 DEC

## European Champions Cup

P1 Toulouse v Ulster (1pm)

TV Live on Sky Sports

P2 Clermont v Exeter (3.15)

TV Live on Sky Sports

P4 Leicester v Munster (5.15)

TV Live on BT Sport

## European Challenge Cup

P1 Newcastle v Connacht (3)

## British & Irish Cup

Nottingham v London Welsh

Ospreys Select v Munster A

Rotherham v Moseley

SAT 26 DEC

## Aviva Premiership

L Irish v Northampton (2.30)

TV Live on BT Sport

Exeter v Sale (3pm)

Leicester v Newcastle (3pm)

## Guinness Pro12

Scarlets v Ospreys (2.05pm)

TV Live on BBC Wales

Connacht v Ulster (6pm)

TV Live on BBC NI/TG4

## GK IPA Championship

Doncaster v Nottingham

London Scottish v Ealing

Moseley v Bedford

## Principality Premiership

Bridgend v Llanelli

Cross Keys v Newport

Ebbw Vale v Bedwas

Llandovery v

Carmarthen Quins

Neath v Aberavon

Pontypridd v Cardiff

SUN 27 DEC

## Aviva Premiership

Wasps v Saracens (2pm)

TV Live on BT Sport

Bath v Worcester (2.30pm)

Harlequins v Gloucester

(4.30pm, Twickenham)

TV Live on BT Sport

## Guinness Pro12

Zebre v Treviso (2pm)

Dragons v Cardiff Blues (3)

TV Live on Sky Sports/S4C

Edinburgh v Glasgow (3.05)

TV Live on BBC Alba

Munster v Leinster (5.15pm)

TV Live on Sky Sports/TG4

## Top 14

Bordeaux-Bègles v Grenoble

Castres v Brive

Clermont v Racing



**Celtic clash**  
George Earle  
fells Josh Strauss

19<sup>th</sup>

DECEMBER, 7.45pm

**SCARLETS v GLASGOW**

FOR TICKETS SEE  
0871 871 8088

SAT 12 DEC

## European Champions Cup

P2 Exeter v Clermont (5.15)

Ospreys v Bordeaux (5.15)

TV Both live on Sky Sports

P3 Glasgow v Scarlets (1pm)

TV Live on Sky Sports

Racing v Northampton (3.15)

TV Live on BT Sport

P4 Treviso v S Français (3.15)

Munster v Leicester (7.45)

Boroughmuir v Gala

Glasgow Hawks v Currie

Hawick v Selkirk

Melrose v Stirling County

SUN 13 DEC

## European Champions Cup

P1 Oyonnax v Saracens (1)

P1 Brive v Enisei (2pm)

P5 Toulon v Leinster (3.15)

TV Live on Sky Sports

Wasps v Bath (5.15pm)

TV Live on BT Sport

## British & Irish Cup

C Blues Select v Cor Pirates

Y Carnegie v Lon Scottish

THU 17 DEC

## European Challenge Cup

P3 M'pellier v C Blues (7.45)

P4 Gloucester v Worc (7.45)

TV Live on Sky Sports

EXTRA, EXTRA!

For all the latest fixture  
dates, as well as Six Nations  
info, visit [po.st/RWfixtures](http://po.st/RWfixtures)





26<sup>th</sup>

DECEMBER, 2.30pm  
IRISH v SAINTS

FOR TICKETS SEE  
0118 968 1016

Montpellier v Agen  
Oyonnax v Stade Français  
Pau v La Rochelle  
Toulouse v Toulon  
**GK IPA Championship**  
Bristol v London Welsh  
Cornish Pirates v Jersey  
Yorks Carnegie v Rotherham

FRI 1 JAN

**Aviva Premiership**  
Northampton v Exeter (3)  
TV Live on BT Sport

**Guinness Pro12**  
Ospreys v Dragons (2pm)  
TV Live on BBC Wales  
Cardiff Blues v Scarlets (5)

TV Live on S4C  
Leinster v Connacht (5)  
TV Live on TG4

**GK IPA Championship**  
Bedford v London Scottish  
SAT 2 JAN

**Aviva Premiership**  
Gloucester v London Irish (3)  
Newcastle v Bath (3pm)  
Saracens v Leicester (3.15)

TV Live on BT Sport  
Sale v Wasps (5.30pm)  
TV Live on BT Sport

**Guinness Pro12**  
Ulster v Munster (3pm)  
TV Live on Sky Sports  
Glasgow v Edinburgh (5.15)  
TV Live on Sky Sports

**Top 14**

Agen v Clermont Auvergne  
Brive v Montpellier

Grenoble v Oyonnax  
La Rochelle v Castres  
Racing v Bordeaux-Bègles  
Stade Français v Toulouse  
Toulon v Pau

**GK IPA Championship**  
Ealing v Yorkshire Carnegie  
Jersey v Doncaster  
London Welsh v Moseley  
Nottingham v Bristol  
Rotherham v Cornish Pirates

**Principality Premiership**  
Aberavon v Carmarthen Q  
Cardiff v Llanelli

Cross Keys v Bedwas  
Llandovery v Bridgend  
Neath v Ebbw Vale  
Pontypridd v Newport  
**Ulster Bank League 1A**  
Galwegians v Young Munster  
Garryowen v Clontarf  
Lansdowne v Ballynahinch  
Old Belvedere v UCD  
Terenure College v Cork Con

SUN 3 JAN

**Aviva Premiership**  
Worcester v Harlequins (3)  
TV Live on BT Sport

**Guinness Pro12**  
Treviso v Zebre (1.30)

WEEKEND 8-10 JAN

**European Champions Cup**

P1 Oyonnax v Ulster  
P2 Bordeaux v Clermont  
P3 Racing v Glasgow  
P4 St Français v Munster  
P5 Toulon v Bath

**European Challenge Cup**

P2 Pau v Castres

FRI 8 JAN

**Guinness Pro12**  
Edinburgh v Treviso (7.30)

SAT 9 JAN

**Aviva Premiership**  
Exeter v Gloucester (3)  
Harlequins v Saracens (3)  
Leicester v N'ampton (3.15pm)

TV Live on BT Sport

**Guinness Pro12**  
Ospreys v Leinster (tbc)  
TV Live on Sky Sports

**Ulster Bank League 1A**  
Ballynahinch v Galwegians  
Clontarf v Lansdowne  
Cork Con v Old Belvedere  
UCD v Garryowen  
Y Munster v Terenure Coll  
**BT Premiership**  
Ayr v Selkirk  
Gala v Heriot's

Glasgow Hawks v Hawick  
Melrose v Currie  
Stirling v Boroughmuir  
SUN 10 JAN

**Aviva Premiership**  
London Irish v Newcastle (2)

TV Live on BT Sport  
Wasps v Worcester (2pm)

**Guinness Pro12**  
Scarlets v Connacht (2.30)  
TV Live on S4C/TG4

WEEKEND 14-17 JAN

**European Champions Cup**

P1 Oyonnax v Toulouse  
Saracens v Ulster  
P2 Bordeaux v Exeter  
Ospreys v Clermont  
P3 Northampton v Glasgow  
Racing v Scarlets  
P4 Leicester v Treviso  
Munster v Stade Français  
P5 Leinster v Bath  
Toulon v Wasps

**European Challenge Cup**

P1 Brive v Connacht  
Enisei v Newcastle  
P2 Dragons v Castres  
Pau v Sale Sharks  
P3 Harlequins v Cardiff Blues  
Calvisano v Montpellier  
P4 Gloucester v La Rochelle  
Worcester v Zebre  
P5 Edinburgh v Agen  
London Irish v Grenoble

● All kick-offs UK & Ireland.  
Fixtures subject to change.



Wrong direction  
Jamie Heaslip is halted

PICS: GETTY IMAGES, HUW EVANS AGENCY & INPHO

1<sup>st</sup>

JANUARY, 5pm  
LEINSTER v CONNACHT

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# RUGBY QUIZ OF THE YEAR

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### WORLD CUP 2015

1. Which team received the most yellow cards (six) at RWC 2015?
2. Which England player tweeted to Neil Back: "You're so old & out of touch your eyes don't work. I hope ur book sales go better than ur coaching."
3. Which TV personality did David Pocock invite to the World Cup final?
4. What did thousands of viewers petition ITV to do?
5. Only two men, who each played in their fourth and final World Cup this year, have made more RWC tackles than France's Thierry Dusautoir. Who? (2)
6. Which Argentina player did Matt Giteau call a "beautiful man"?
7. Samoa scrum-half Kahn Fotuali'i called a 35-year-old from Crawley an "idiot". Why?
8. Jack Nowell, Bryan Habana, JP Pietersen and Nehe Milner-Skudder – who's the odd one out?
9. What did Matt Dawson do that upset New Zealanders?

**TOTAL  
10**





## MEN OF MYSTERY

Can you identify the ten personalities pictured at the World Cup? Two marks for each correct answer



## HAVING A DOMESTIC

- Which four internationals scored a try in the Aviva Premiership final? (4)
- Which stalwart won the Premiership's Golden Boot for the fourth time?
- Against which team did London Welsh bag their only point of the 2014-15 Premiership campaign?
- Who became only the fifth away team to win a Super Rugby final?
- Which two lock greats played their last games for Munster and Glasgow in the Guinness Pro12 final? (2)
- Whose late try, converted by Ryan Lamb, broke Bristol hearts in the Greene King IPA Championship final?

**TOTAL**  
10

## WORDSEARCH

The surnames of 14 goalkickers, past and present, from the English Premiership or the Pro12 are hidden in the grid. Find each name and, for two bonus points, explain what they have in common.

S U B T T I R E V E  
T M E I A C H D N Z  
I N V E G O R O G E  
M H A R D G S O N R  
P I N G S N A G I E  
S A S A I H T R K L  
O O R K E A T L E Y  
N D L K Y R A G O M  
O I L S S D O O L F  
W H E N O S K C A J

**TOTAL**  
30

## GRAND NATIONAL

- Who took five minutes to score the first try of Six Nations 2015?
- Which fixture from the championship featured 90 errors and 28 penalties?
- Which Irishman, with 26% of the public vote, was named Player of the Tournament?
- George North grabbed Wales' first championship hat-trick since which Lion scored four tries against England in 1969?
- The points tally of 660 was a Six Nations record – true or false?
- What's the only country to have won all three Six Nations titles

- men, women and U20 – in the same year with a Grand Slam?
- Who came off the bench to win the Rugby Championship for Australia – but was omitted from the World Cup squad?
  - How did Liam Messam breach the rules during the NZ v Australia game on 15 August, earning the Kiwis a fine?
  - Who scored a 19-minute hat-trick as Argentina beat South Africa for the first time?
  - Who finished runners-up in the HSBC Sevens World Series for a record sixth time?

**TOTAL**  
10

## WHO SAID THAT?

Match the quote from this year's World Cup with the speaker...

- Stephen **BETHAM**
- Schalk **BRITS**
- Michael **CHEIKA**
- Kieran **CROWLEY**
- Jean **DE VILLIERS**
- Eddie **JONES**
- Steve **HANSEN**
- John **HARDIE**
- Gavin **HASTINGS**
- Johan **VAN GRAAN**

- "I had to treat it with a bit of respect. You only get one head."
- "No one died."
- "Sit back, enjoy and criticise and be like Clive Woodward and get a job on the television. That's my dream."
- "We talked about what we wanted to do at half-time. It must have been a terrible speech."
- "We play similar to England but have better-looking players."

**TOTAL**  
20

- "I bet they're getting ready to rip our heads off."
- "We can't come to a war with our hands and a pocket knife."
- "If I see referee Craig Joubert again, I'm going to tell him how disgusted I am."
- "A talent hits a target no one else can hit, but a genius hits a target no one else can see."
- "I only got 300 out of 500 in my high-school certificate. My mother wasn't happy."

## WHAT TO DO NOW

Send your answers to our editorial address on page 14 or email them to [rugbyworldcompetitions@timeinc.com](mailto:rugbyworldcompetitions@timeinc.com) by Wednesday 20 January for a chance to win. Winners will be able to choose products to the value of their prize (£200 for first prize and £50 for two runners-up) from [lovell-rugby.co.uk](http://lovell-rugby.co.uk). Answers to the quiz, which is out of 100, will be posted on [rugbyworld.com](http://rugbyworld.com) on Monday 25 January. Usual Timeinc (UK) rules apply. Good luck!

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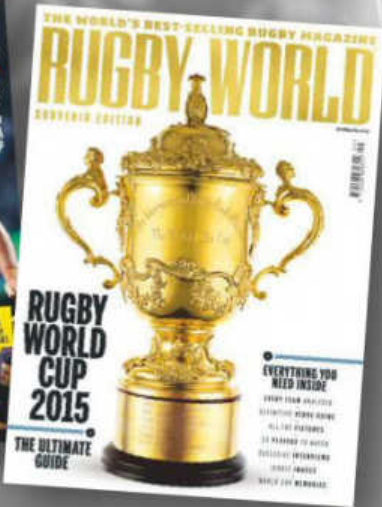
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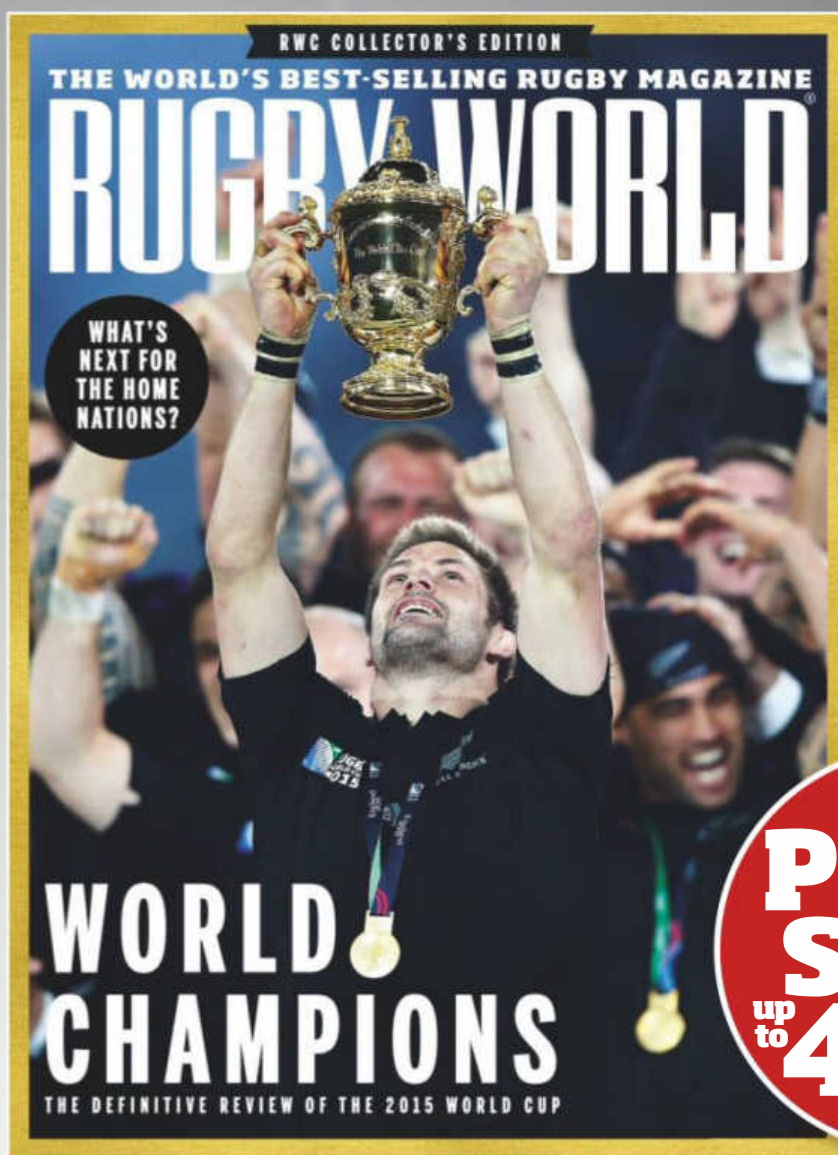
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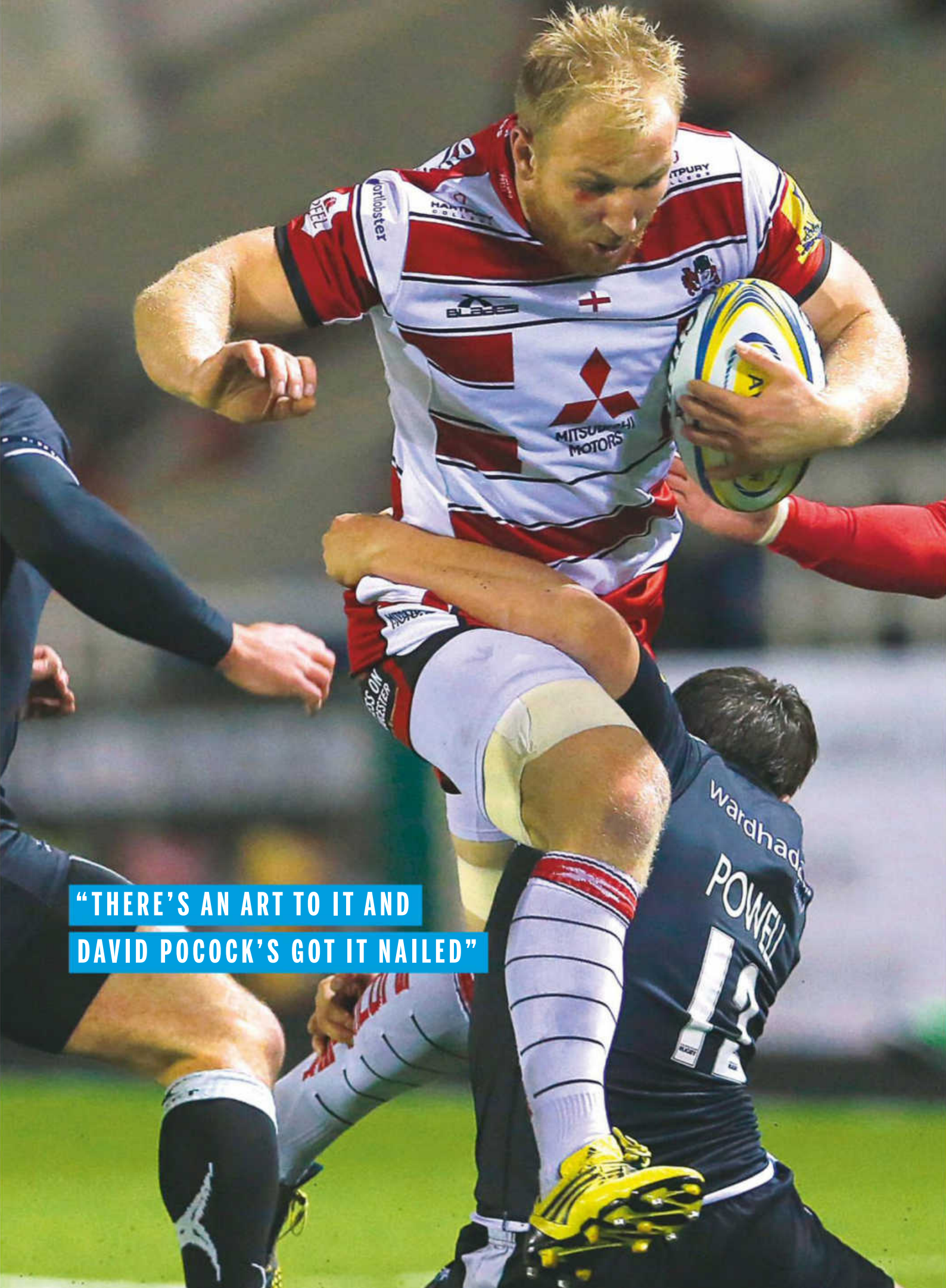
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**“THERE’S AN ART TO IT AND  
DAVID POCOCK’S GOT IT NAILED”**



# MATT KVESIC

Gloucester's flanker is just what England need, says RW's Sarah Mockford

**M**ATT KVESIC is reflecting on the breakdown brilliance shown during the World Cup, that ability to win a turnover in the blink of an eye. He's long been an admirer of Richie McCaw's work in this particular field, but it was an Aussie trio who stood out most for the Gloucester flanker.

"David Pocock was exceptional around the breakdown – he was probably the best player in the tournament," says Kvesic. "(Michael) Hooper and (Scott) Fardy were formidable too. Fardy wasn't given much credit for that; his great performances went under the radar. Richie McCaw was still at his best – he had another 50 caps in him! He was exceptional at seven. A lot of good players in the back row stood out. Sam Warburton and Justin Tipuric, who was unlucky not to get much game time, were brilliant as well."

So does Kvesic look to pick up pointers from other opensides when he's watching games? "You do it subconsciously. You're thinking, 'What would I have done? Why have they done that? Maybe I'll practise that in the week.' You do try to pick up new things, but half the time you don't see it! Pocock's so quick you look up and they're already in the 15m channel scoring tries. There's an art to it and he's got it nailed."

While the world's top nations have fine snafflers of the ball in their sides, England have done without a traditional openside for the past four years. Whatever your views on Chris Robshaw, it's clear he's not a turnover specialist in the Pocock or McCaw mould. Still, Stuart Lancaster opted for the more workhorse, versatile types in his World Cup squad, Robshaw, Tom Wood and James Haskell getting the nod while Kvesic, an out-and-out seven, was cut before the warm-ups.

"It wasn't hard to see who was off and who wasn't," he recalls of that week in camp. "I never expected to make the World Cup squad, but I'd have loved the chance to play in the warm-up games. If you play really well and you're not picked, you can say you did everything. If you have a stinker, you had the opportunity but didn't take it. That's the only thing I'm disappointed about – I didn't have an opportunity to show what I can do in a game – but it was a great experience for me."

As for pushing his case for the Six Nations, it's far from the forefront of his mind. "I do set goals, for



## FACT FILE

**Age** 23 (14 April 1992)  
**Born** Iserlohn, Germany  
**Club** Gloucester  
**Position** Openside  
**Height** 6ft 2in  
**Weight** 16st 7lb  
**England caps** Two  
**Twitter** @mattkvesic

## MY TOP 3 SPORTSMEN

### Usain Bolt

"He's a cool dude, the world's fastest man."

### Richie McCaw

"Because of what he's done for rugby and for New Zealand."

### Jordan Spieth

"Breaking records and dominating golf at his age is pretty impressive."

games, for six months, for the season, but I've not mentioned England in any this time. It's not the focus for me. I want to back up the season I had at Gloucester last year and push for a top-six spot with my club. It (England) can get on top of you if you're constantly thinking about it, who you're facing this week and so on, so I've not really thought about it. I've just got to play as well as I can at my club."

Kvesic might not be thinking about England, but England should be thinking about him.

With the skill of winning turnovers so prevalent at the World Cup, new coach Eddie Jones is sure to be giving the make-up of his back row serious thought – and the likes of Kvesic, Will Fraser and Luke Wallace are showing that they are adept in that area.

Kvesic is in his third season at Gloucester having joined from Worcester and after a shaky opening campaign – bad timing given that he'd impressed on England's 2013 tour to Argentina – he's now found his groove in the cherry-and-white stripes. During Gloucester's European Challenge Cup-winning run, for example, he made more turnovers (16) and tackles (109) than any other player in the tournament. A more solid scrummage has allowed him to get on the front foot at the breakdown, but he also pays tribute to the coaches for the improvement in his form.

"Last year was definitely a better season for me personally and it was nice to get silverware in Europe. I just felt a lot more comfortable and a few new boys made the difference from that first year."

"I'm enjoying the new coaching set-up. They came in and made a real impact (in 2014). David Humphreys is at the top steering the ship and I've talked a lot about what Laurie Fisher has brought. He's been great for me. He'll tell you when you've been good and when you've been poor, and I like that from coaches."

"There's more of a breakdown focus and we're a bit sharper around the breakdown now. There's more detail and a lot more structure, even though it might not look that way when we're playing!"

Things seem to be clicking off the pitch too, Kvesic mentioning the brutal banter on Gloucester's WhatsApp group. And if Kvesic maintains his form on the pitch, he may soon be proving his own turnover credentials on the Test stage. **RW**



# DTH VAN DER MERWE

## The flying Scarlets and Canada wing talks turnovers and turnarounds

**F**EW PLAYERS better embodied the spirit of RWC 2015 than Daniel Tailliferre Hauman van der Merwe, the stat-busting Canadian who scored in every match. After six prolific years at Glasgow, the wing has started a new chapter at the Scarlets...



**I've always been known as DTH.** My parents never called me by my Christian name. My dad shares the same initials and was called DTH until he became a doctor, then he switched to Daniel.

**Canada's results overshadowed this year's World Cup.** It was the worst we've ever done. But we played a brand of rugby people enjoyed watching; we're not as physical as other teams so have to use the ball and our speed. We took Italy close and had a hell of a game with France – we just need more games against top nations.

**Playing for pro contracts was an extra incentive for some players.** The English Premiership stopped for the tournament and it was a chance for people to show what they could do. Ciaran Hearn got a contract at London Irish and Djustice Sears-Duru a trial at Leicester. He's 21 and one of the shining lights of Canadian rugby. He had a hell of a game against Italy's Martin Castrogiovanni.

**I got a contract in England off the back of a World Cup, in 2007.** Glen Ella was our backs coach and his brother was friends with Eddie Jones, who was coaching Saracens. I'd decided to go travelling and was two days into the trip when Saracens called to say they needed someone for a couple of months as injury cover.

**I nearly quit rugby at 21.** I broke my ankle at the Dubai Sevens. It wasn't getting any better and I thought it was the end of my career. But in the end I had an op to take bone chips out of it and I was fine. It was misdiagnosed.

**My favourite try at RWC 2015 was the one against Italy.** We'd discussed it all week, as they defended quite narrow. Just before Italy kicked off, I told Tyler Ardrone it could be on. He caught the restart and called it, and I got past Giovanbattista Venditti and it went from there.

**Getting turnovers is one of my strengths.** I like to target the ball and the ribs. Sometimes getting a turnover can give you the momentum shift you need.

**The turnarounds for Tier Two nations at RWC 2015 were ridiculous.** We played three games in 11 days. The schedule should give every team a fair chance – Japan

might have beaten Scotland with a fairer schedule. Canada needs to play its best team in every game and it took its toll. When we played Romania it was their third game and our fourth and I think the schedule affected how we finished that game (losing 17-15 after leading 15-0). It needs to be fairer by 2019.

**Otherwise, the World Cup was fantastic.**

The training facilities and places we stayed in were awesome, and the volunteer staff brilliant.

**The new pro American league is huge.** It's

only a short season to start with, six sides each playing ten games, but Canada are due to join in from 2017 and hopefully it will kick on. If the new league takes off, I'd love to coach in it – I did some courses in Glasgow.


**The Scarlets is an exciting place to be.** The main difference has been travel time, because in Glasgow I was a two-minute drive from training but now I'm half an hour away. We bought a house in Mumbles, which I'm fixing up. Canada had a camp at Swansea before the World Cup so I was able to pop back and cut the grass!

**My whole focus is on providing for my family.** I'm married to Gill and have a two-year-old daughter Nola, plus another one on the way in January. We're enjoying living in the UK, it's a different culture.

**I have so much respect for Scarlets coach Stephen Jones.** He was very accurate as a player and that's how he coaches. The way Scarlets play is one reason I came here. We face Glasgow twice in the Champions Cup this month. When I saw that draw, I couldn't believe it!

**I grew up in South Africa, in the Western Cape.** I liked players like James Small, Jean de Villiers, Robbie Fleck and Breyton Paulse. I made the U16 provincial squad but was the slowest guy in the back division.

**Emigrating to Canada at 17 was tough.** I'd become more independent by then and had a lot of friends. But my dad wanted a better future for us kids and chose Canada over Australia. The rugby community is so strong. The day after we landed, I played for my high school, Dr Martin LeBoldus in Saskatchewan. And the next week I played for my new club, Regina Rogues.

**I hope to be a firefighter one day.** I've done training but still need to do the Class Three licence for driving trucks, plus a few day courses. I did some training in Texas that coincided with the 4 July celebrations – there were 92 fires in the locality that day. 

### FACT FILE

**Age** 29 (28 April 1986)  
**Born** Worcester, SA  
**Position** Wing  
**Region** Scarlets  
**Height** 6ft  
**Weight** 15st 10lb  
**Canada caps** 39  
**Test points** 100 (20T)  
**Twitter** @DTHVDM

### MY TOP 3s

#### Wings

Shane Williams  
 Drew Mitchell  
 Bryan Habana

#### Food

Lamb chops  
 Steak

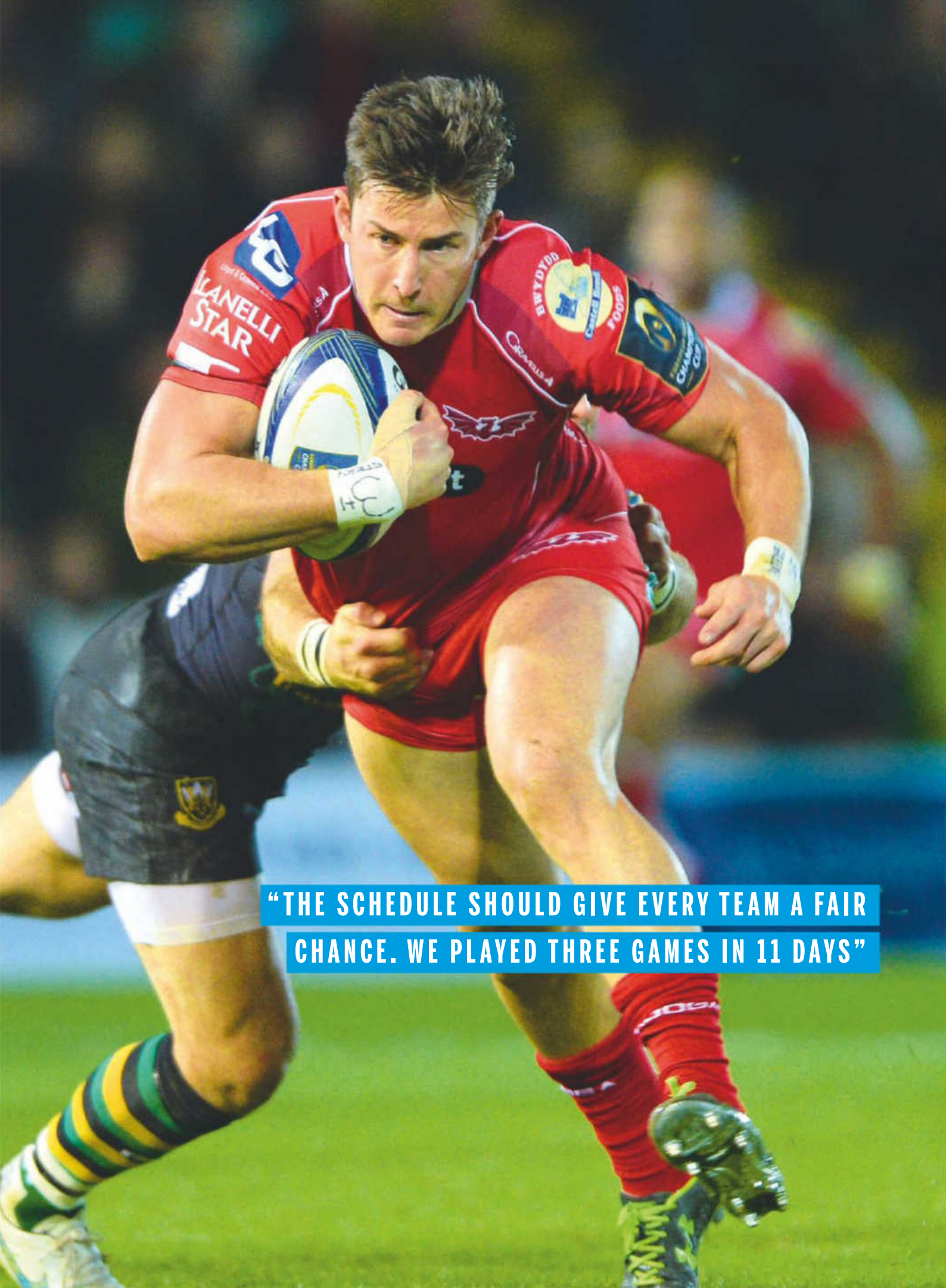
#### Lasagne

#### Holidays

Mexico  
 Mozambique  
 Barcelona

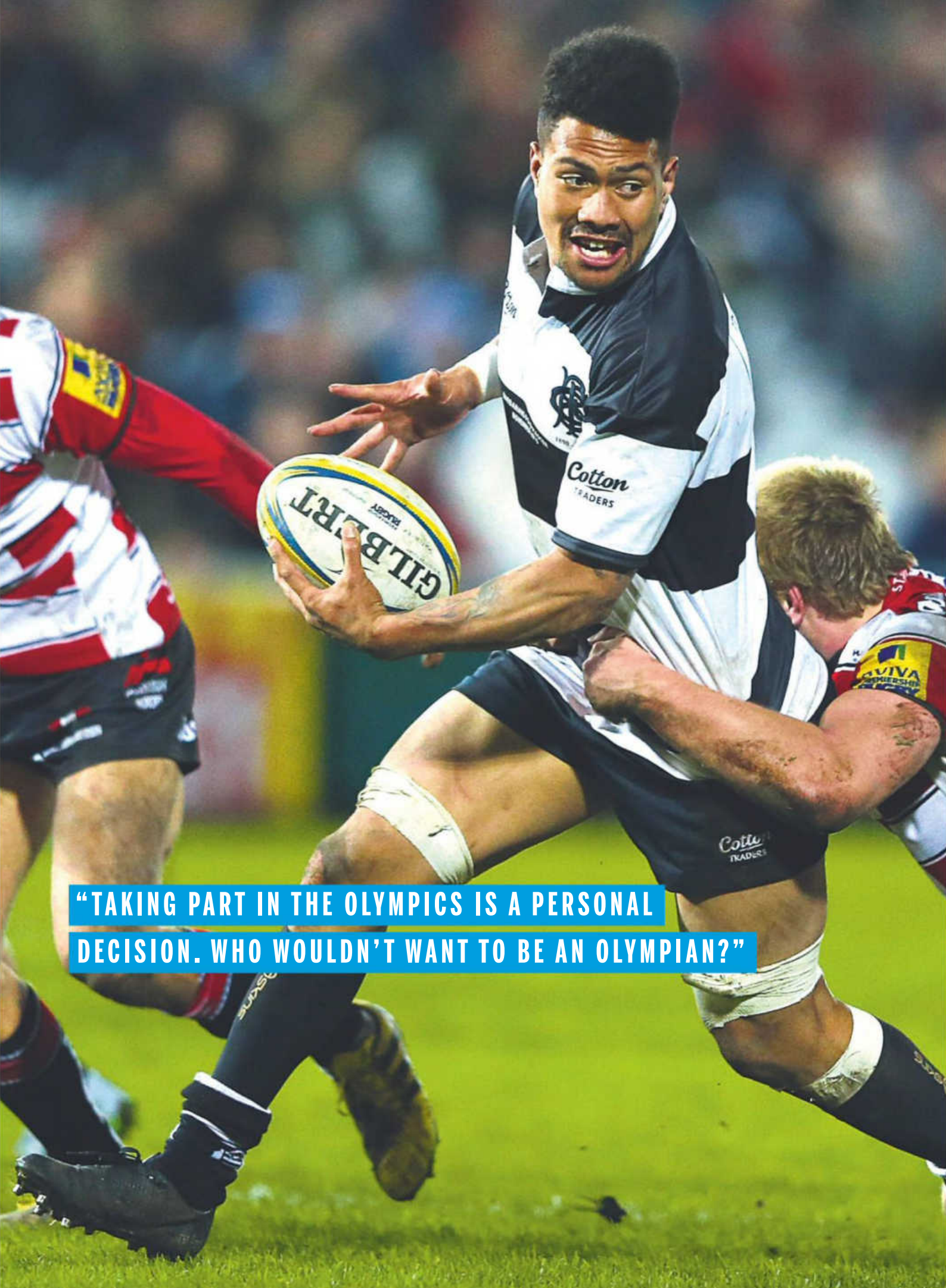






**“THE SCHEDULE SHOULD GIVE EVERY TEAM A FAIR  
CHANCE. WE PLAYED THREE GAMES IN 11 DAYS”**





**“TAKING PART IN THE OLYMPICS IS A PERSONAL  
DECISION. WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO BE AN OLYMPIAN?”**



# ARDIE SAVEA

RW's Owain Jones has a chat with a little brother set for a big future

**W**HEN YOUR surname is Savea, there's a fair assumption you'll be no slouch, but it does your reputation no harm when that fact is rammed home by one of the world's premier speedsters.

While chatting away to Ardie Savea, younger brother of Julian, at the Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane and discussing his blistering pace, a smiling Savea points over my shoulder: "Now this guy is probably faster."

Twisting my neck, I see an outstretched hand and look up to see Nehe Milner-Skudder, the All Blacks' stepper par excellence returning the compliment. "This guy is rapid," he says, motioning a plane taking off. "Nah, I just like to run hard," grins the 22-year-old Savea.

In London to play for the Barbarians and younger by three years than his superstar brother 'Jules', Ardie is already making a name for himself as a jet-heeled openside and supreme fetcher for the Hurricanes. That he was left at home for the World Cup, with Richie McCaw and Sam Cane filling the No 7 berths, tells you more about New Zealand's obscene strength in depth rather than any lack of aptitude on Savea's part.

The Wellington-born flyer had much to celebrate in the 2015 Super Rugby season before injury in the semi-final saw him miss the final. Many respected commentators said the Highlanders' 21-14 final win was made easier by Savea's absence. The man himself modestly downplays his importance to a side that boasts World Cup winners Milner-Skudder, brother Julian, Beauden Barrett and Dane Coles, but it would be remiss not to ask if seeing those triumphant All Blacks milling around the hotel is painful for Savea? After a short pause: "Not really. I was at home for the whole thing. I was just another fan willing the All Blacks on. I was really nervous watching the semis and the final. It was tough missing out but it's all good." Case closed.

With the likes of Charles Piutau and Frank Halai already showing up well in the Aviva Premiership, does Savea envisage a European sojourn at some point in the future? "I'm with the Canes until next year, then I'll look at my options. I just want to play footie."

Bearing a strong resemblance to his big bro, minus the ever-changing haircut, Savea says rugby has been his life since the age of four. It seemed a natural progression



## FACT FILE

**Age** 22 (14 Oct 1993)  
**Born** Wellington, NZ  
**Super Rugby franchise** Hurricanes  
**Position** Openside  
**Height** 6ft 2in  
**Weight** 15st 12lb  
**Twitter** @ardiesavea

## MY TOP 3 SINGERS

**Jason Derulo**  
"A track like *Want to Want Me* is what I warm up to."  
**Justin Bieber**  
"He's thrown down decent tunes."  
**Beyonce**  
"When I'm in the car I might sing along to her."



that after Rongotai College – alma mater of Ma'a Nonu as well as the Saveas – he would graduate to national honours with NZ Sevens, and play for the Wellington Lions in the ITM Cup and the Hurricanes, where he made his debut at 19. "Growing up we had legends to look up to, like Jonah Lomu and Christian Cullen. For me and Jules it was inspirational to play for them. It's quite surreal even now."

After the end-of-year tour with the Baa-Baas and a holiday in Fiji, 2016 is set to be quite a

year for Savea. "Yeah, I'm mixing it up. I'll play the first ten Super Rugby games with the Canes and then play four sevens tournaments before the squad for Rio (the Olympics) gets announced. It's going to be a busy year," he says with a wide smile.

Despite touring with the All Blacks in 2013, Savea says he's not heard a peep out of their management in a while. "I've had no communication from Steve (Hansen) of late. Taking part in the Olympic Sevens is a personal decision – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Who wouldn't want to be an Olympian?"

New Zealand have certainly named a star-studded sevens squad for 2015-16, with Sonny Bill Williams, Liam Messam and young No 8 Akira Ioane in there with Savea, but the flanker hasn't given up his All Blacks dream. "It's up to me to keep grinding away and give them no option but to pick me."

Family means a lot to Savea, as his heavily inked left arm shows. "That's my old lady, Lina, on my forearm and my father, Malina, on my upper bicep," he says proudly. "If it wasn't for these two, we wouldn't be here. They are everything to us. They're both from Samoa and growing up they ferried us about to make sure we were always looked after."

His big brother has been a big influence too. "Jules has been massive for me. He was always the superstar kid. I just used to hang on his coat-tails."

Given the boys' focus on sport, did the Savea brothers always concentrate at school? "Oh, yes. The old man was big on school. If our reports weren't up to scratch it was no rugby. That was the worst kind of punishment!" Over the next decade, the All Blacks and wider rugby world will surely owe Ma and Pa Savea no end of gratitude for their firm parenting. Ardie Savea: watch this space. **RW**

# DAVID DENTON

The Scotland back-row talks through his roller-coaster move to Bath

**A** SENSE OF adventure is one thing that first stands out about physical Scotland forward David Denton. And we aren't just talking about his raids into enemy territory. Six years ago he left Africa to make a new life in Scotland and he has just moved again, joining Premiership outfit Bath in a whirlwind transfer. Here he explains how fast things shifted, what he will miss about Edinburgh and his life in Zimbabwe...



**The most important thing for me is to develop my offloading game.** If I can attack more in the wider channels and get players running off me – which is what the coaches want from me – that will be great. It's important to play out of your comfort zone. **I'm held firmly under the thumb!** One thing I appreciate from Bath is that they got tickets for me and my missus, Shelley Kent, to come down. She works as a senior account exec for a digital firm, but she's helping me settle in

**My move to Bath was crazy.** After I first heard about the opportunity, a week later I had signed and three days after that I had moved down. The guys at Bath have made it a really easy transition, though, and the coaches have been great as well.

**The SRU were very clear from the start that they didn't want me to leave.** But two top clubs they were prepared to consider were Bath and Saracens – places they know players will be looked after. So it's been a roller-coaster, getting thrown straight into the mix, but it helps to have the backing of your union.

**It was important to me that younger guys would get a chance at Edinburgh now I'm gone.** That's a point I raised. Because they have good depth and hopefully I've opened the door for players like Magnus Bradbury and Jamie Ritchie. If I'd stayed they might not have gotten a game, but they can and Edinburgh are still good enough to get into the top six of the Pro12 or even a play-off.

**Leaving Edinburgh was the hardest decision I've had to make.** It would have been a lot easier if I'd prepared for it for six months and I was looking around for next season. I would have liked to give the club one last game and give them the right send-off. I had the best six years of my life in Edinburgh.

**A lot of people have asked me about parting ways with Matt Scott!** Matt has always been great; I have a flat in Edinburgh with him and I have confided in him in the past. But I'll hopefully be back in Edinburgh every February and just before any summer tour.

**The big thing for me is that Bath are a strong team to contend in the European Cup and Premiership play-offs.** It's a very young team. They have a very strong coaching set-up. And the style of rugby they like to play can really add something to my game.

## FACT FILE

**Age** 25 (5 Feb 1990)  
**Born** Marondera, Zim  
**Club** Bath  
**Position** Back-row  
**Height** 6ft 5in  
**Weight** 18st 10lb  
**Scotland caps** 32  
**Twitter** @dentweezy

## MY TOP 3s

### Recent films

Spectre  
 The Martian  
 Focus

### Musical genres

House  
 R'n'B

Rap

### Zimbabwean life

Weather  
 Fishing  
 Safari



until February, before heading back up.

**Decorating the new place will be a team effort.** If I left her to it there would be fairies and unicorns on the walls! I can't be trusted either. I've been very lucky that, like Edinburgh, Bath is an incredible city.

**It's a different world down here.** The other night we had dinner at Farleigh House. It was a good team night and the boys have already been awesome with me. We got a few of those big tables and had a meal which was totally out of this world.

**I went to the same school in Zimbabwe as a lot of sports stars.** I was a junior at Peterhouse when Tendai Mtawarira went there. He was an unbelievable No 8 at the time, and Brian Mujati also went there. Tom and Sam Curran are top cricketers who went there, as did England cricketer Gary Ballance.

**I was 15 when Robert Mugabe decided to close all the private schools.** I turned up at my school gates and there were guys from the army there holding AK47s. I didn't want to leave, but my parents decided to send me to school in South Africa.

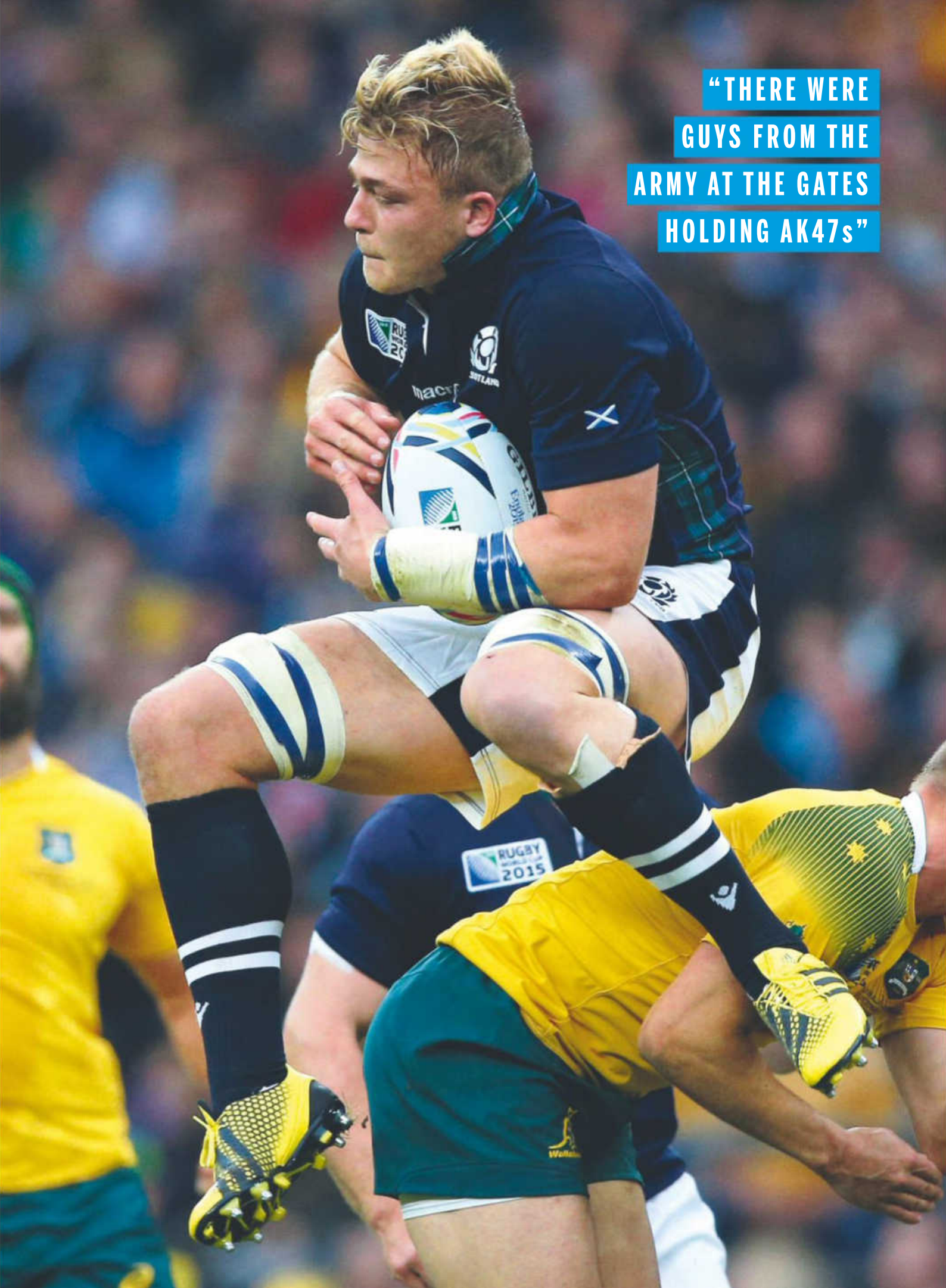
**I'll forever be grateful to my parents for making me go.** There are a lot of talented guys in Zimbabwean sport, but they can get lost looking to play at a higher level for money. When I went to Kingswood College (in South Africa) and played rugby, it helped me develop.

**I am a player who plans ahead.** Sometimes it can come out as arrogant to say out loud so I won't give you details, but you need to dream big and coming to Bath will help me develop as a player.

**I also massively believe that Scotland can do incredible things.** I'll be sure to keep working and hopefully be there for the Six Nations. That'll be fun, but it could be a bit bizarre to play against some of my team-mates in that Six Nations opener! **RW**



**“THERE WERE  
GUYS FROM THE  
ARMY AT THE GATES  
HOLDING AK47s”**







**“I WANT TO PLAY FOR IRELAND IF  
JOE THINKS I’M GOOD ENOUGH”**



# CJ STANDER

The Munster No 8 is talking Joe Schmidt's sort of language. By Owain Jones

**C**J STANDER is an affable sort, happy to spin a yarn, so it's ironic that in his first few weeks in Ireland he was virtually monosyllabic. Only able to answer questions with a simple 'yes' or 'no', as he struggled to decipher Limerick accents, he also had to sharpen his use of English, having grown up on a farm in George on the Western Cape, using his mother tongue, Afrikaans.

Fast-forward three years and you can barely stop Stander talking. There is plenty of chat about him too, notably over his possible inclusion in the Ireland squad. For Munster fans it's a matter of when, not if, despite the fact he would need to usurp 80-cap Ireland and Leinster No 8 Jamie Heaslip, who turns 32 this month. Thomond Park's very own wrecking ball qualified on residency on 1 November and confirms his availability. "I want to play for Ireland if Joe (Schmidt) thinks I'm good enough. We had a chat about my game, what I need to work on, so we'll see what happens."

An outstanding schoolboy athlete who represented his country at discus, Stander first picked up a rugby ball at seven and was deployed in the backs, but his coaches at Oakdale school soon had a rethink. "I started off at fly-half but when I got the ball I'd put my head down and look for contact. I was soon moved to No 8," he chuckles. At 16 he had to choose between athletics and rugby and when he heard of interest from the Blue Bulls, the decision was easy. "I thought I'd miss my mates. Training on my own isn't me, so I chose rugby."

Stander went on to play for South Africa U20 for two years, captaining them in 2010. After 11 games of Super Rugby, the Blue Bulls dangled a fairly lacklustre new contract in front of him and he learnt of Munster's interest. "When I heard that, I thought I'd better up my game. My grandfather used to talk about Munster beating the All Blacks. They're very famous. The Bulls looked like they were saying 'move on' so I did."

Stander's Twitter biography declares, "I'm not afraid of dying, but I'm afraid of dying before I've lived", and he says choosing to travel overseas embodied that. "I didn't want to wonder 'what if?' I wanted to experience Europe. Moving here was like winning the Lotto."

At first Stander missed the sunshine and braai every night. The weather really caught him out. "On my first



day, I couldn't see a thing in Cork, it was shrouded in fog. I thought, 'It's only one day', but I didn't see the sunshine for two weeks! I'd stupidly given away my waterproofs and got ill. It was a steep learning curve."

Those first few months were character building as he adjusted to life in Ireland. "I know the difference between a Cork and Limerick accent now," he smiles. "Away from the security of home, I guess I grew up."

After a series of outstanding performances this season that led to him being named in the team of the week in the prestigious French journal *L'Equipe*, Stander says his game still has room for improvement. "I could do with doing a few more steps out of contact, instead of trying to bulldoze people, and my decision-making needs to improve," he says.

Stand-in captain for Munster in the wake of Peter O'Mahony's knee injury, Stander watched the World Cup with interest. "Kieran Read is the best all-round No 8 in the world and guys like Duane Vermeulen and Taulupe Faletau aren't far behind. Then there's David Pocock who is just a freak – a seven disguised in an eight jersey." Stander has picked up some nuances of back-row play from one of Munster's finest, Anthony Foley, his head coach. "Anthony's been a great mentor to me. Week in, week out, we sit down and work through my game, but also in life in general."

Stander says the cosmopolitan mix at Munster this year is creating a good vibe. "Francis Saili plays music around the place and smiles, Lucas Amoroso has just pitched up and Mark Chisholm is a real leader. When he talks, you listen. We're a group of players who want to establish our own legacy in the shirt."

Europe is foremost in Munster's minds, with the double header against two-time champions Leicester coming up this month. "It's going to be an electric atmosphere. Leicester seem like they're on the way up and won well in Treviso. We know it will be tough."

Stander says the squad is motivated by not disappointing Munster's passionate fans. "Every man, woman and child lives and breathes rugby. We let them down not qualifying for the quarters last year and we have to make it right this season."

Some standout performances in Europe this month may see Stander pull on a green shirt in 2016. **rw**

## FACT FILE

**Name** Christiaan Johan Stander  
**Age** 25 (14 Oct 1990)  
**Born** George, S Africa  
**Province** Munster  
**Position** No 8  
**Height** 6ft 2in  
**Weight** 17st 13lb  
**Twitter** @CJStander

## MY TOP 3

### FOODS

**Peppered biltong**  
"Full of protein and you can eat it anywhere. I make it myself."  
**Makhani chicken curry**  
"It's not too hot but it's very tasty."  
**Pizza**  
"The night before a game, I have a Pollo Astra at Milano's (Pizza Express)."





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ENGLAND





WORDS: SARAH MOCKFORD // MAIN PICTURE: JASON CAIRNDUFF/ACTION IMAGES

# SLADE RUNNER

*Rugby World heads to Exeter to meet the next great hope for English rugby – the versatile Chiefs back, **Henry Slade***

**A** FEW MINUTES into our interview, Henry Slade gets up to demonstrate the 'right' way to turn a light switch on and off. You might think there isn't a wrong way, but for Slade there is. When the Exeter Chiefs and England back turns the lights on or off, he can only touch the switch itself, none of the panelling around it. Should his fingers slip and he not hit the switch exactly how he likes, he has to do it again – but not just once. The repeat factor is always an odd number, so he'll do it three, five or seven times.

Jack Nowell then happens to walk past the two of us and confirms that this is the worst of Slade's OCD tendencies or idiosyncrasies, call them what you will – and Nowell should know, having roomed with his Chiefs team-mate for much of England's World Cup preparations and campaign.

Slade says he's been like this since he was a child. Always tidy, always with a routine. Now it manifests itself in his wardrobe – everything arranged by colour, light to dark – and packing his bag for a game – there's



## THE FACTS

### HENRY SLADE

**Age** 22 (19 March 1993)

**Born** Plymouth, Devon

**Club** Exeter Chiefs

**Position** No 10/centre

**England caps** Two

**Points** Five (1T)

**Twitter** @Sladey\_10

a specific order items must be put in. On the way to the pitch for every match he has to touch the doorframe of the dressing room with the little finger of his right hand. Going to bed used to take some time, what with all the things he had to do first, but he says he's trained himself to be better at this, slimlining the routine.

When Slade lived in the Exeter academy house with half-a-dozen team-mates, pranks played on him involved rearranging his neat clothes. He then moved in with Nowell and Dave Ewers, and "ran a tight ship" in terms of tidiness. These days he lives on his own

with his Cockapoo, Frank – but it seems even dogs can disrupt the orderliness of Slade's life.

"He does two things that break me," says the 22-year-old with a wry smile. "I've got an American fridge-freezer with two long handles and he's chewed the bottom of both of them. There's a good 10cm of each that he's chewed, so I'm going to have to get them replaced. He also digs in the garden. I've had to fence off areas and reseed because he keeps digging holes. He's good company, though." ➔



➔ One area where Slade's methodical approach and love of routine has proved vital is in dealing with diabetes. Diagnosed four years ago, he has to continually check his blood-sugar levels and always carries a few Jelly Babies in case of emergency.

And it has to be said that neither the diabetes nor his OCD nature have harmed his rugby career. He is one of the few England players to have emerged from the past couple of months in credit after an impressively composed debut in the World Cup warm-up against France and a try-scoring performance against Uruguay in the last pool game in Manchester.

Okay, he has yet to be put under the intense pressure of a truly competitive Test match but his form for Exeter has been standout for the past two years and his ability to play at ten, 12 and 13 offers England versatility. We may well have seen the future in that Uruguay game, Slade sandwiched between George Ford and Jonathan Joseph, acting as an extra playmaker with his superb distribution and providing another kicking option.

So how does Slade view his flexibility? Is it hard to adapt to the different roles? Simply put: no. "I train in all of them in the week anyway," he says. "Even if I'm playing centre at the weekend I run in sessions during the week at ten as well. I'm not getting out of practice and the way I play centre anyway it's not like I smash it up, it's like having another ten.

"You have a lot more time and space at 13. When you're at ten, there's a lot to think about – the forwards, people behind you and in front of you, organising the

▲ **Choice move**  
Slade weighs up his options against Bath

direction the team is going. At centre I'll feed stuff to Steeno (Gareth Steenson) at ten about where the space is, what to call next and I'll scan the backfield. I play exactly the same at 12 (as at 13). Myself and Sam (Hill) interchange quite a lot anyway.

"I probably do prefer ten because I've been a ten for a long time. But I'd definitely not complain about being at centre – I just prefer to be on the pitch. I always thought I'd enjoy playing at centre, but it's probably

## "HOW I PLAY CENTRE, IT'S LIKE HAVING ANOTHER TEN"

gone better than I thought. Everyone who's played there said it's a hard place to defend, but I've had a bit of time to get used to it and get comfortable."

To look at Slade it's easy to write him off as one of rugby's pretty boys. As Exeter head coach Rob Baxter said earlier this year: "You can make misconceptions about Henry. When you look at the boyband haircut and the tan, you can come to the wrong conclusions."

For the record, the tan is real, but beneath the surface there's an inner steel to Slade; a determination to succeed that stems from being overlooked as a youngster because of his size – the growth spurt to 6ft 2in came late while he'll never be a hulking back in the mould of Jamie Roberts or Ma'a Nonu and currently weighs in at around 14st 2lb. He doesn't shirk his ➔



# LISTEN UP!



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→ defensive responsibilities, however, and actually cites that as “my favourite part of the game”. He has his best mate to thank for helping him work on his tackling. Leon Fricker is now on a golf scholarship at university in Florida but from the ages of eight to 14 the next-door neighbours would play endless rounds of one-on-one.

“In the garden, which was probably 30m by 15m, we’d play for hours every night. He was always so much bigger than me, quicker and bigger, that I’d try that much harder. I was always small growing up, so you had to have that fight in you to keep up with the big kids. It’s probably ingrained in me to be that competitive, to want to beat someone. We’d have really competitive games, getting to 100-95. It was a pretty even split as to who won. We’d come in with bruises but it was all played in good spirit.”

Fricker is not the only one Slade highlights as helping him in his career. He lists several names who have had an influence over the years, from schoolteachers Richard Edwards, Richard Thompson and Scott Williams to his Ivybridge coaches Paul Setter and Adrian Coles, all of whom aided his development.

Ali Hepher, who spotted him playing for Plymouth College, and Ricky Pellow have put in the time after training to work with him on specific skills, while he describes Baxter as a man you simply don’t want to disappoint. “He’s a guy who demands respect, the stuff he does and says people listen to,” says Slade. “Some people just have it and he’s one of those guys – people don’t want to let him down.”

▼ **All in his stride**  
Running in his first  
Test try v Uruguay



The whole environment at Sandy Park seems to bring out the best in Slade and his fellow youngsters. The likes of Slade, Nowell, Ewers, Hill and Luke Cowan-Dickie used to talk about how “cool” it would be to play together for the Chiefs when they were in the academy and now it has come to pass it’s clear that the experience has lived up to expectations.

Slade also appreciates how he was eased into the senior team, first making appearances off the bench for five or ten minutes, then ten or 15 and so on before he started the odd game. These days he’s a first XV regular but the progress was steady rather than rushed, so he felt comfortable with each step forward. All in all, it’s a happy camp.

“I’m in my fifth season so I’ve been here for a long time, but people have been here longer than that and the majority of the squad have been together for a long time. We’re all such good mates and we gel so well together.

“It’s a great environment to be in. I come in for training and laugh so hard I’m nearly crying every day, but we know when to stop that. We have a laugh but at training we focus on the job in hand. I’ve never experienced anything different, but people who’ve come from other clubs say that hands down it’s the best environment they’ve experienced. I thought it was good but for outsiders to say that is great. It’s an awesome place.”

Exeter continue to defy expectations, the one promoted team who have avoided a boomerang experience. Last season it was only points difference that cost them a place in the Aviva Premiership play-offs; this term they started well in the league, sitting in second place after four rounds, and despite a disappointing start to their Champions Cup campaign, a 25-13 defeat at the Ospreys, they are enjoying being back in Europe’s premier competition. Slade can’t wait for this month’s visit to Clermont’s Stade Marcel Michelin.

“Exeter played Clermont a few years ago, before I broke into the first team, and the boys said it was an



## SLADE ON HIS TEAM-MATES

**VAINEST** **Nowellsy (Jack Nowell)**. He shaves his legs and wears girls’ perfume, although he calls it body spray.

**TIGHTEST** I won’t name names but the group of moths know who they are.

**STRONGEST** That would be between **Dave Ewers**, **Don Armand** and **Elvis Taione**. Dave wouldn’t be the strongest in the gym but he’s very strong on the pitch.

**BEST BANTER** I love **Carl Rimmer**. I sit next to him in the changing room and he’s got a really dry sense of humour that makes me laugh.

**BEST DRESSED** **Will Chudley** is always very well dressed. He leaves training in his jeans and nice shoes.

**WORST DRESSED** **Geoff Parling**. He wears jeans and trainers.

**BEST SINGER** **Geoff** fancies himself as a singer. He wants to start a band.

**WORST SINGER** I don’t know many people’s voices but I’ll say **Luke Cowan-Dickie** is the worst because he sings a lot and it’s not great.

**BEST ROOM-MATE** I usually room with **Dave Ewers** and he’s good. The worst would be a snorer or Ben White...







**Group hug**  
Celebrating with  
his Exeter team-mates

## “EVERY DAY I COME IN AND LAUGH SO HARD I’M NEARLY CRYING”

awesome atmosphere. I’m excited to get out there. We were disappointed not to be in it (the Champions Cup) last year, so we worked hard all of that season to get in. First we want to enjoy it, given the amount of hard work we put in to get here, but we also want to go hard at it.

“We keep progressing year on year; it’s not big leaps every year but to go forward for us is positive. Last season we were really happy to be in and around the top four; this year we’ll be disappointed if we don’t make it.”

Slade’s progress in England terms has been slightly quicker. Brought into the squad during last season’s Six Nations to get a taste of the environment, he was an outside bet to make the World Cup squad but forced the coaches’ hands by performing so well in the warm-up. Now he’s being touted as the player to solve the midfield dilemma England have endured since RWC 2003.

He describes this World Cup as a great learning experience, particularly as a young player, but he admits to being disappointed to play in only one game. The decision not to include him on the bench certainly raised eyebrows from observers during the tournament.

In a way, though, his star has risen from not playing in those defeats by Wales and Australia – the static nature of England’s attack highlighting what Slade can bring as a playmaker – and with Eddie Jones now in charge of England for the Six Nations, he could become the inside-centre his country has lacked for a decade.

Henry Slade looks like a man who can help England flick the switch for the 2019 World Cup, provided that switch is flicked the right way of course. **RW**

▼ **“He demands respect”**  
Rob Baxter heads up  
the Chiefs operation



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“  
MY MIND IS  
LOGICAL  
RATHER THAN  
CREATIVE  
”

**Iain Henderson** is studying maths and likes to conduct experiments in microwaves – but he can also produce brilliance on a rugby pitch for Ulster and Ireland...

**AIN HENDERSON** has packed a lot of memories into his short few years in the top echelons of professional rugby. Twenty-three years old, 23 Ireland caps and all sorts of highs and lows to pick from – one of the highest and surely the lowest coming in one tumultuous week in Wales in October. He can talk about the “awesome experience” of coming on for the stricken Paul O’Connell in a freakishly attritional World Cup game against France. And he can wax just as lyrically about the despair of that defeat by Argentina a week later.

But there’s something else he mentions when looking back on the big moments in his burgeoning career. He takes us back to St Patrick’s Day, 2010. To Ravenhill on Ulster Schools Cup final day.

Henderson was Belfast Royal Academy’s No 8. Up against BRA were the boys of Ballymena. Only three points separated them at the end and, alas for Henderson, he was on the wrong side of it.

“It was 10-7,” he says. “I replay it time and time again in my mind. It comes back to me every day I’m in →

➔ Ravenhill. Callum Patterson scored the winning drop-goal. I can still see it. He's just played for Ulster A actually."

The reports of the match state that Henderson was a barnstorming presence in the BRA back row and that he was just pipped to the Man of the Match award. You test his memory of the day and ask who won that award and he doesn't hesitate, not for a second. "Caleb Morrison. He was their wing. Scored their try. I can still see that one as well."

He laughs as he talks. Laughs at the fact that this stuff still matters to him and annoys him. And he says it's funny how life works. Henderson was never picked for the Ulster Schools team and without the imprimatur of the Ulster Schools selectors, he was never getting capped for Irish Schools. All of that passed him by.

"Yeah, I was overlooked. I'm quite laid-back and maybe I didn't take it as seriously as I should have. That could have been part of it. When they're looking at large groups of schoolkids maybe that's how I got caught out. Other fellas were hungrier than me."

Had you looked at him then, you'd have wondered about him. He was creating a noise all right, but not on the rugby field. The plan was to go to Edinburgh to study Actuarial Science at Heriot-Watt University, but he re-routed himself after learning of Ulster's interest in him and instead went to Queen's to study maths.

Study and rugby became his twin obsessions, along with some pyrotechnics in his student house. This is where the uncertainty would have kicked in. It would have been hard to look at that young man and conclude that he was destined for big things on the great stage of a Rugby World Cup. But he was.

"We had two microwaves in the house – who needs two microwaves? It was myself and a couple of my mates. We decided one of them could be experimental. We put a massive array of things in there just to see what would happen. Aerosols, eggs, metal, batteries... Now, I wouldn't encourage anybody to do this at home. The eggs were the funny one because they exploded. We used to put whole boxes in there and have bets to see who's one lasted the longest. We'd have them all marked.

"It all stemmed from one of my brothers. We were always doing stupid stuff around the house. Even in the last year my mum got one of those blowtorch things for doing the top of crème brûlées, but Mum disassembled it into three pieces and hid them in three different places in the house so I couldn't get hold of it. She was worried we were going to start blowtorching things."

He's still a student. Maybe the days of microwaving anything that moved are over – maybe – but he's still into the books, still tipping away at the maths degree, not at Queen's anymore but as part of the Open University.

"Maths just makes sense to me. My mind is logical rather than creative. I did maths, physics and chemistry for my A levels. The arts are not my forte. Rugby comes first, but in the evening time and during a day off I'll try to get a few hours here and there.

"I started at Queen's but I transferred across to the Open University. It was difficult trying to fit in exams



Mentor  
Chris Henry

around pre-season camps for Ulster and Ireland. I missed a couple of exams because of it. It just became very difficult to squeeze everything in, so this is a lot more flexible. It makes sense."

When he talks about his teenage self he says that he tended to float around with his head in the clouds. Chilled about everything, stressed about nothing. "I'd say I'm still a little like that, but I'm getting better. I've been told that I don't have a great concentration span. At training, I'd

find myself daydreaming and thinking about things other than what I should have been concentrating on. Then I started to get some games with Ulster and I fell under the wing of Chris Henry."

The Ulster and Ireland openside was a big influence on Henderson. "He was one of the more senior players and he talked me through training. We were gym partners. Anything I didn't understand about the plays and life in a professional rugby team he let me know. He told me when I had to be switched on and when I could daydream. Chris was huge for me. That was 2012. My concentration span is getting slightly better. Marginally."

The big breakthrough came that same year: his first Ulster start in Limerick against Munster. Ulster were beaten out the gate, but Henderson scored and played well. "The following season was when Stevie Ferris got his injury. His ankle op didn't go to plan and I got a couple more starts. I started to feel a bit more comfortable. I was getting on the ball a lot and learning a lot from Johan Muller, our South African second-row. I was picking up bits and pieces from lots of players and adding them to my armoury."

The athleticism and work-rate of the young Ulsterman came to the attention of Declan Kidney, then the Ireland coach. Kidney invited Henderson into the national camp to see how life was at the top end of the game. Then he capped him, against South Africa in the autumn of 2012. Then he capped him again, and again.



Leaps & bounds  
In lineout action for  
Ireland at RWC 2015

PICS: INPHO

## THE FACTS

### IAIN HENDERSON

Age 23 (21 Feb 1992)

Born Craigavon

Province Ulster

Height 6ft 6in

Weight 19st

Ireland caps 23 (2T)

Twitter name

@Hendersonlain





▲ **In full flight**  
Leading the charge  
in Ulster colours

## “I PREFER THE BACK ROW. THERE’S A BIT MORE FREEDOM TO PLAY”

“I only had five or six caps for Ulster when Declan brought me down to get the gist of what camp life was like. I was covering second row and back row and I got my cap and that was a massive shock to me.”

The coach changed – from Kidney to Joe Schmidt – but Henderson stayed in the picture. Maybe in the margins of the picture, but visible all the same. He was back-up to the locks and back-up on the blindside flank. He won his caps largely from the bench and hoovered up knowledge from those around him. “I looked at Paulie (O’Connell) and learnt about his professionalism, not only on the field but off it. His diet, sleep, the way he looked after himself, his preparation for meetings, walk-throughs, training. The extra few per cent. It’s only small things but they all add up.”

For some time, Henderson has been seen as O’Connell’s heir apparent and if the reasons why weren’t already blatantly obvious before the World Cup, then they were truly unmissable afterwards, particularly in the wake of his sensational performance off the bench against the French in place of the fallen O’Connell.

“I enjoy playing second-row but I prefer the back row. There’s a bit more freedom to play, you can be looser, you’re a bit fresher to carry ball. When you’re a tighthead lock your legs definitely take more of a hammering than if you’re a loosehead lock, and when you’re playing six it’s even less again. You still have to scrummage but not quite as much as in the second row.

“I look back on the World Cup now and it was massively frustrating. The highs of the France game and the lows of Argentina. Some of the boys said that the noise in the Millennium on the day we played France was the loudest

they’d ever heard, so it was great to be part of that. Argentina was just a soul-destroyer. You let it get to you for a while afterwards, but you have to drive on. You can’t mope. There are too many games to play.”

Those games are coming thick and fast. Champions Cup ties, Pro12 matches and the Six Nations coming down the track. In the post-O’Connell age and with Peter O’Mahony, the first-choice blindside, out injured until March, Henderson is not quite sure how Schmidt sees him now – a lock or a blindside.

“There’s a lot of competition. I don’t know what Joe is thinking. Everybody is constantly trying to figure him out and the fact that we haven’t figured him out is good because he keeps everyone on their toes.

“With Joe, you have to know all the detail and if you’re not nailed-on he’ll call you out. He’ll say it in front of everybody. I think everybody is scared of being called out so publicly and it does drive standards. It’s a harsh but very effective way of making sure everybody is nailed-on. It’s constructive. It’s won us two championships and the ambition is to win a third.”

All eyes on the future. And, for Iain Henderson, what a future it plans to be. **RW**

WALES





WORDS  
OWAIN JONES  
MAIN PICTURE  
STU FORSTER/GETTY IMAGES

# DIRECTION

Warren Gatland will get one more stab at winning the World Cup with Wales. Who are the men who could sweep the nation to glory at Japan 2019?

**W**

**HEN BEARDED** behemoth Duane Vermeulen, with a deft flick of the wrist, offloaded to fellow Springbok Fourie du Preez to scamper over in the corner, another brave yet ultimately unsuccessful World Cup campaign came to a soul-searching end for Wales.

As Wales plan for the next four-year cycle, the biggest positive is that they've retained the services of Warren Gatland, after conjecture that he might be approached to lead beleaguered England. It will be fascinating to see if the New Zealander tweaks the brand of rugby that has served him so well, especially after a lack of creativity during the World Cup.

Of the recent World Cup squad, only three players will no longer be available by Japan 2019. Gethin Jenkins, a regular starter, will be almost 40 by then while Paul James and Mike Phillips will be collecting their rugby pensions by the time Wales touch down in the Far East.

There will also be a smattering of fledgling stars. After all, who'd have thought in 2011 that Samson Lee, Tyler Morgan and Gareth Anscombe would have been lining up in a RWC quarter-final? So what will the make-up of the Wales squad be and how can Gatland improve on 2015's showing? Let's assess his options... ➔

## THE COAL-FACE FRONT ROW

THE 2016 Six Nations promises to be Gethin Jenkins's, and potentially Paul James's, final hurrah. When they depart, Wales will lose nearly 200 caps of experience from the starboard side of the scrum.

Looseheads **Nicky Smith**, 21, and **Rob Evans**, 23, are seen as the next duo to vie for the shirt. Smith is a fine technician and has a power-fend that befits a former No 8. The Osprey showed rich promise before injury curtailed his season, while the ebullient Evans is more like Jenkins; a prominent carrier with a strong work-rate.

At hooker, Wales will choose between **Scott Baldwin**, now first choice after excelling in the World Cup at the set-piece and with powerful carries in the tight spaces, and the ultra-competitive **Ken Owens**. Out-of-favour Richard Hibbard's creaking body surely rules him out.

At tighthead, **Samson Lee** will only be 26 at the next World Cup, by which time he may have a Lions tour under his belt. Providing competition will be giant Scarlet **Rhodri Jones**, who is playing behind Lee at regional level, and **Tomas Francis**, the 20st Exeter tighthead, who has lots to learn but is rich in potential. *Breakthrough acts:* Powerful tighthead **Dillon Lewis**, 19, has broken through into the Cardiff Blues starting line-up and will be vying with Cross Keys tighthead **Leon Brown** to break into the full Wales squad. At No 2, the Dragons' **Elliot Dee** and the dynamic **Liam Belcher** are firmly on the radar of the Wales management.

## THE ENGINE ROOM SECOND ROW

With **Alun Wyn Jones** and **Luke Charteris** in their thirties, neither are assured of making it to Japan. New Bath signing Charteris, approaching 33, is very unlikely to be around, while it will likely prove to be Wyn Jones's international swansong, as he nears 150 caps.

Wyn Jones's natural heir may well be **Rory Thornton**, who like him, started at Bonymaen. The 20-year-old has just signed a National Dual Contract (NDC) and, while on the gangly side at the moment, he is a technically adept middle jumper with an all-court game.

Bradley Davies, another whose body has taken some punishment over the years, will be a grizzled 32, while **Jake Ball** is an increasingly influential carrier, tackler and ruck hitter who will be nearing his prime at 28.

*Breakthrough acts:* Ospreys lock **Adam Beard** is only 20 in the New Year, but the 6ft 8in, 19st lock is highly rated for his ability to read the game and carry hard. **Seb Davies** at Cardiff Blues is also one to keep tabs on.

## THE HITMEN BACK ROW

The back-row talent is brimming over for Wales. Fitness permitting, after a decade of throwing himself at the knees of tacklers, **Dan Lydiate** will still be first choice. He will be strongly challenged by the emerging **Ross Moriarty**, who lacks the raw power of Lydiate but has more of an edge and is quicker over the turf.

At No 8, the indestructible **Taulupe Faletau** is one of the world's best back-rows and by 2019 will only be 28 and pushing 100 caps. Hoping to push him will be two Ospreys: **Dan Baker**, a specialist No 8, and the versatile **James King**, who can play anywhere in the back five.



## FRONT ROW

Rob Evans <sup>(27)</sup>  
Scott Baldwin <sup>(31)</sup>  
Samson Lee <sup>(26)</sup>



## SECOND ROW

Alun Wyn Jones <sup>(34)</sup>  
Jake Ball <sup>(28)</sup>



## BACK ROW

Dan Lydiate <sup>(31)</sup>  
Sam Warburton <sup>(30)</sup>  
Taulupe Faletau <sup>(28)</sup>



## HALF-BACK

Rhys Webb <sup>(30)</sup>  
Dan Biggar <sup>(29)</sup>



## MIDFIELD

Scott Williams <sup>(28)</sup>  
Jonathan Davies <sup>(31)</sup>



## BACK THREE

George North <sup>(27)</sup>  
Leigh Halfpenny <sup>(30)</sup>  
Liam Williams <sup>(28)</sup>



## BENCH

Nicky Smith <sup>(25)</sup>  
Ken Owens <sup>(32)</sup>  
Dillon Lewis <sup>(23)</sup>  
Rory Thornton <sup>(24)</sup>  
Justin Tipuric <sup>(30)</sup>  
Gareth Davies <sup>(29)</sup>  
Rhys Patchell <sup>(26)</sup>  
Hallam Amos <sup>(24)</sup>

Players' RWC 2019 ages in brackets. Average age of the XV is 29 years 70 days – three months shy per man of NZ's 2015 winners.



Other countries cast their eyes enviously to Wales at openside. At 27, **Sam Warburton** has been a model of world-class excellence throughout 2015, while **Justin Tipuric** is arguably the most gifted No 7 in Europe, excelling in the wide channels and with link play.

Knocking on the door are breakdown snafflers **James Davies** and **Ellis Jenkins**, who can also play at No 6. *Breakthrough acts:* Last year's Wales U20 captain **Ollie Griffiths** has been starting ahead of Nic Cudd at the Dragons and will have Warburton and Tipuric in his sights. At No 8, hard-running **Harrison Keddle**, who got the winning try in the Singha Sevens, is highly regarded.

## THE GENERALS HALF-BACK

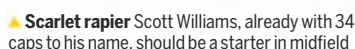
After an illustrious career, Mike Phillips's legs failed him a year shy of the World Cup, whilst **Rhys Webb's** stellar year was halted abruptly with injury.

**Gareth Davies** stepped up with aplomb. He scored five tries in as many games at the World Cup and will be looking to prise the jersey off Webb's back when the Ospreys sniper returns. With **Lloyd Williams** next in line, the trio have similar characteristics: quick service, a varied kicking game and élan around the fringes.

At No 10, **Dan Biggar** has been imperious for Wales, hoisting himself into the world-class bracket only two years after being the sole member of Wales' Six Nations title-winning squad not to make it on the 2013 Lions tour. Biggar's accuracy off the tee, ability to kick and collect, and aggressive defence see him as Wales' undisputed pivot. Emerging fast is Leicester's **Owen Williams**, who can control the game. **Gareth Anscombe** has shown the requisite skills as a playmaker, too.

*Breakthrough acts:* **Rhys Patchell** looks set to be under Stephen Jones's tutelage at the Scarlets in the next few years and has the gifts to be a match-winning ten. At 22, with a siege-gun boot, sharp brain and offloading ability,



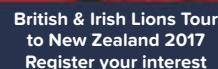
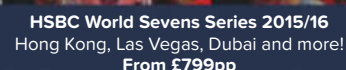
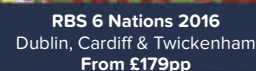
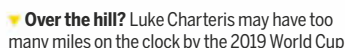


**Breakthrough acts:** Bridgend-born **Owen Watkin** scored one of the tries of this year's U20 Six Nations and the 6ft 2in, 16st outside-centre has been raising eyebrows at the Ospreys with his carrying, running lines and ball skills.

Wales' back three were relative onlookers in the World Cup as they struggled for ball against the major teams.

**“AT 22, RHYS PATCHELL HAS A SHARP BRAIN, SIEGE-GUN BOOT AND OFFLOADING ABILITY”**

**Breakthrough acts:** Only 19, **Lloyd Lewis** is carved out of the Shane Williams mould. Small in stature, he's incredibly nimble and has delightful balance. Five tries in ten appearances for Cross Keys earned the Wales U20 wing a Dragons contract. **EW**



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# ON THE UP & UP

There seems to be no stopping Scotland lock **Jonny Gray**, who's become Glasgow captain at just 21. We find out what makes him so good...

WORDS: KATIE FIELD // MAIN PICTURE: JAN KRUGER/GETTY IMAGES



**RICHELIE GRAY** casts a long shadow – all 6ft 9in of him. For a couple of decades, Jonny Gray was “Richie’s little brother”, almost five years younger and following in his footsteps through the Scotland age grades and into the Glasgow Warriors ranks.

Now Jonny has truly emerged into the spotlight in his own right. He is racking up the Scotland caps, has made as many Pro12 appearances for the family’s hometown team as Richie did, and had his status as a leading figure at Scotstoun recognised when he was made captain for this season. “Jonny isn’t Richie’s little brother any more – Richie is now Jonny’s big brother,” quips former Scotland and Warriors captain Al Kellock, who works behind the scenes at the club.

When I interviewed Richie for this magazine back in

♥ **Peas in a pod**  
Glasgow giants  
Gray and Al Kellock



the spring of 2011, he told me all about his brother Jonathan, who was playing at Calderglen High School, Cambuslang rugby club and for Scotland U18. “He’s better than me,” Richie said. Actually, it is difficult to say which of the brothers is superior because though they both play in the second row, they have different strengths.

“When you see them play together they complement each other so well. They are different personalities and different players,” says Kellock, who mentored both in their late teens. “There’s nothing fancy about what Jonny does as a person or a rugby player, but he’s got an enormous amount of talent.”

Richie charges around in open play a bit more, but Jonny’s work-rate is immense and he is more prominent in defence and at the breakdown. He was fifth in the top tacklers list at the World Cup with a total of 67 in just →







→ four matches, only ten short of top dogs Francois Louw and Lood de Jager, who each played seven games.

So far, Jonny has reached his major career landmarks around one year earlier than Richie – he made his Pro12 debut for Glasgow at 18, whereas Richie was 19, and pulled on a senior Scotland jersey for the first time four months short of his 20th birthday, while Richie was ten months older when he was capped.

But this feature is not meant to pitch Gray against Gray. It is supposed to highlight the huge potential of Jonny as a player and a leader. You have to be pretty special to be chosen as your club captain at the age of 21 and when I asked Kellock if the young lock was on track to be a central figure in the Scotland and Glasgow teams for the next decade, his answer was unequivocal. “Jonny has been a key figure at Glasgow for the last few years and he is undoubtedly a key figure for Scotland now.

“There is a huge amount of competition around – Grant Gilchrist was doing very well at Edinburgh and with Scotland and had bad luck with injury, so he’ll be right in the mix. Jonny knows you must be playing very, very well to get picked but he continually wants to get better. He’s not going to sit back and expect to be picked.”

When you meet Jonny Gray he seems a little shy, but when we sat down for a chat in the hubbub of last month’s European Champions Cup launch event, his enthusiasm soon shone through. He’s passionate about the Warriors and Scotland and deadly serious in his quest for success, but is still pinching himself at how far he has come.

“I never thought in my life I’d be playing for Glasgow and Scotland and in a World Cup – and to have the opportunity to do that with my brother... it’s hard to put it into words,” Gray says. “To play alongside Richie on as big a stage as that is something I will never forget.”

We met just five days after Glasgow boss Gregor Townsend had offered him the captaincy and he was still starry-eyed over it. “I was shocked at first but I was absolutely delighted. It’s a huge honour. I’ve got so much passion and pride for the club.

“I was a bit speechless but I said ‘yes’ straightaway. I’m so lucky to have this opportunity. Glasgow is where I grew up and where my family and friends are and where my brother played. I watched him play at Firhill and he used to tell me how much he loved it here. We have come so far from playing at Firhill to the facilities we have now at Scotstoun. Every year it has pushed forward. Scotstoun is a fun place to be and everyone works hard for each other and the culture is great.”

That famed Warriors culture, built around a great team spirit and an expectation of the highest of standards, will help Gray carry the burden of the captaincy.

Townsend says: “There are a number of leaders in our squad, setting standards, supporting and challenging their team-mates on a daily basis. It’s great for Jonny that he knows he’ll have the likes of Josh Strauss, Rob Harley, Peter Horne and Chris Fusaro supporting him.”

Gray agrees. “We have a great leadership team and Al Kellock is around the office and makes himself available to help any player with anything, big or small.”

Scotland skipper Greig Laidlaw provides another role model for Gray. “I have been lucky to play under two great captains in Al and Greig. They are different but also similar in a lot of ways, with passion in the way they speak and a lot of knowledge. Greig will know all the lineout calls and Al knew all the backs moves. To play under two guys like that has been incredible.”

Returning to Glasgow from the World Cup, Gray was pleased to see how well the new players and emerging youngsters had fared while 21 of the squad were on Test duty. The Warriors were in the top half of the Guinness Pro12 table, with four wins from seven games, when the Champions Cup rolled around. The shocking terrorist attacks in Paris, that left more than 130 people dead, forced the postponement of Glasgow’s European opener at Racing 92, though mercifully the players were safe in a hotel on the outskirts of the city at the time of the attacks.

Not for the first time, sport was put into sharp perspective but the show must go on and Glasgow, also paired with Saints and Scarlets in Pool Three, were fortunate to come under Gray’s calm and methodical leadership. Preparation is something Gray pays a lot of attention to, as Scotland resource coach Nathan Hines has discovered.

“He is very thorough,” says Hines of the skipper. “Even in the week of the World Cup quarter-final when he didn’t think he would be available (Gray was initially banned for a tip tackle but cleared to play on appeal the day before the match), he was still looking at videos. That’s half the battle with young players.”



▲ **Winning Warriors**  
Pro12 title celebrations – before Gray’s cameo on the flight home



► **Double trouble**  
Both Gray brothers were outstanding at the World Cup

## THE FACTS JONNY GRAY

**Age** 21 (14 March 1994)  
**Born** Glasgow  
**Position** Second-row  
**Club** Glasgow Warriors  
**Height** 6ft 6in  
**Weight** 19st  
**Scotland caps** 19 (1T)  
**Twitter** @jonnygray14



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▲ **Line manager** Jonny scores during the 35-30 bonus-point win at Cardiff Blues last month

Kellock agrees. "It's every aspect of his life: his recovery, his diet, his extra fitness work and analysis work – if anything, he needs to be pulled back. He uncovers every stone to make sure he is doing the best he possibly can. He looks after himself and he knows his own body already, which is a massive thing because for some people that takes a lot of years to know what's good for them."

Kellock says Gray's willingness to learn marked him out as special

from the very beginning of his time with Glasgow.

"Jonny always wants to get better. Even as a young guy you could see him trying to get bits of information to improve himself. He had a very short apprenticeship. He came in and everyone saw a lot of potential and he got into the senior squad very quickly.

"He works hard and is still looking to improve what he is doing, but in a very Jonny Gray, quiet kind of way.

## "HE WAS IN THE ACADEMY, THEN HE TOOK MY GLASGOW JERSEY!"

There is no bravado. He asks questions but he is very understated for the ability he's got."

Gray let his quiet façade slip when he went up to the front of the plane on the Warriors' triumphant trip home from last May's Pro12 final in Belfast and sang a song. "That was totally out of character," laughs Kellock.

He is usually pretty unflappable too. "He got a bit of stick about being Richie's brother, but you would need a pickaxe to get a reaction out of Jonny," says Kellock, before adding: "But if you know the buttons to press he's got a bit of red mist in there."

Kellock knows Gray as well as anyone, having worked with him in his teens. "He was in the academy, then he took my Glasgow jersey! I didn't want to accept it, but he was just too good in the end. Richie took my Scotland jersey and Jonny took my Glasgow one, but I have nothing but admiration for what they do. Seeing them playing so well gives me such pride."

Hines and Kellock both expect Gray to keep improving for years to come. "His work-rate is unbelievable for a big guy," says Hines. "He's already a good lineout caller and confident, even though he doesn't come over as a confident guy. He hasn't got a deficiency in any one area, but experience will make him a better player. To captain your club at 21 is a big compliment but not a responsibility which is beyond him. It will only make him better."

Kellock adds: "If you suggest he should be doing something he does it. That is why he is going to get better and better. There is so much potential still there, in terms of his technical abilities and as a person as well. It will be accelerated with the captaincy."

Jonny Gray has had two first-class examples to follow thus far, in the shape of Richie and Kellock. Both are still ready to steer him in the right direction, but somehow it doesn't seem likely that he will stray from that path. **RW**



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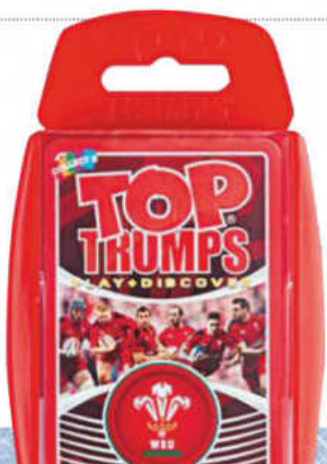
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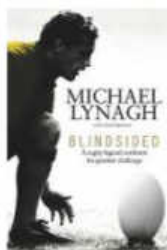
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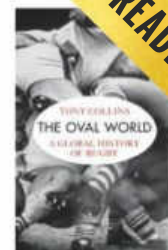
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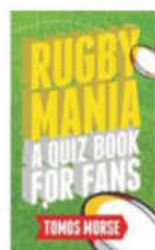
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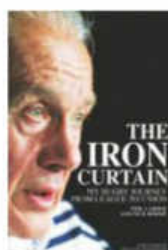
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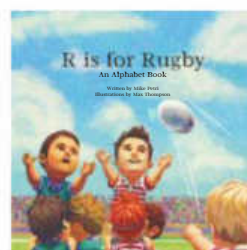
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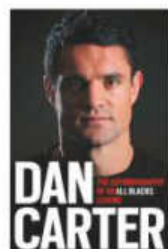
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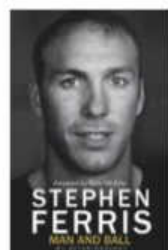
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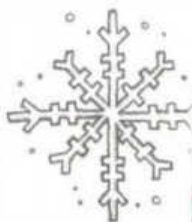
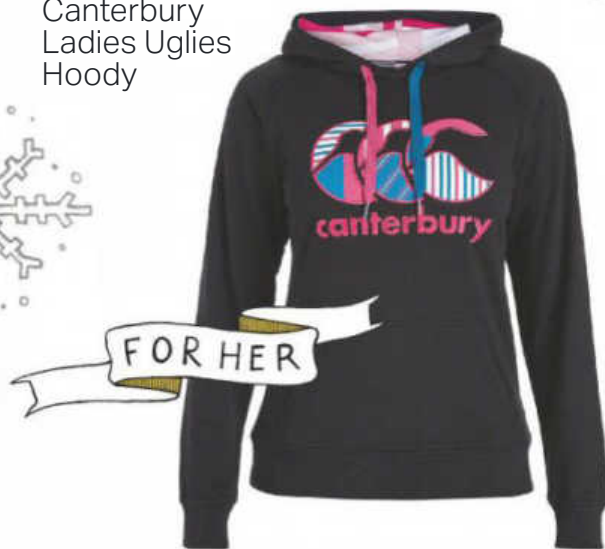
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WORDS FRANKIE DEGES // MAIN PICTURE PHIL WALTER/GETTY IMAGES

# THE MAN BEHIND PUMAS' PROGRESS

Little-known **Daniel Hourcade** has transformed Argentina into an all-out attacking machine. Get to know the coach...

**T**HERE WAS a certain level of surprise when World Rugby nominated Argentina's Daniel Hourcade amongst its top coaches for 2015. His team had played superb rugby during the World Cup but to suddenly be elevated to the august company of coaches such as Steve Hansen, Eddie Jones and eventual winner Michael Cheika caught a few people off guard.

Yet Hourcade merited the nomination on the strength of the Pumas' change of tactics and how they took RWC 2015 by storm with their dynamic, breathtaking, open style. And his tears after the semi-final defeat by the Wallabies demonstrate how passionate he can be.

"I watched that game 46 times and the more I see it, the more convinced I am that we could have won it," he says, sitting at home in Tucumán, the northern Argentine province that is his place in the world. "We gave them two early, easy tries and they dominated the breakdown for a period, but we had 13 clean breaks against six, we were better in the lineout, the scrum..."

A few weeks have passed since that game and Hourcade continues to play it over in his mind and on his computer. Argentina, who had beaten Ireland by playing attacking rugby, didn't change from that style in the semi-final at Twickenham. Nicolás Sánchez, →

→ Hourcade's finest pupil, chose to put in an inside pass deep in his half and Aussie lock Rob Simmons pounced to touch down within 70 seconds. It would be 14-3 by the ninth minute. With a player in the sin-bin, it went to 19-6 and the Wallabies led 19-9 at half-time.

"Had Nico passed outside instead of inside, we had numbers and an overlap; it was an uphill battle after that. I was happy that we played with the same intention as the game against Ireland a week earlier, but our execution failed us. In one game we scored the points; in the other the opposition scored them."

Soon after, the Pumas had to front up again against the Springboks in the third-place play-off. With ten changes to the starting XV, most of them through injury, it was understandable that they struggled. They did score with the game's final play having attacked at every opportunity, but at times failed to play for position.

Had things gone to plan, though, Hourcade wouldn't have even been at the helm. Maybe Cheika would have been coaching the Pumas and Hourcade would have been at home preparing the next batch of internationals.

**B**orn and bred in San Miguel de Tucumán, Hourcade's was a life of hard toil. As the oldest of four brothers, he had to start working at 12 after his father's early death. His first job was as a singing boy in the provincial lottery – he would sing out the winning numbers. When his voice changed around 14, he joined a bank as a bellboy; he would leave as a manager 33 years later to pursue his rugby dreams.

A scrum-half for the Universitario de Tucumán, he became best known as a coach, initially with his province and soon after with Argentina U21 in 2001. He would also coach Argentina Sevens until a chance to coach professionally in Portugal arose. "Those were great learning years and I was lucky to go to Portugal at the right time and enjoy qualifying and going to Rugby World Cup 2007 with them (as assistant coach)," he says, acknowledging the friends he made in those days.

A short-lived move to Rouen ended when the club went bankrupt, but job offers were waiting for him in Portugal when he got a phone call from Agustín Pichot that would change his life. "I'd heard of him but decided to travel to Portugal to see him train," recalls Pichot, who was heading the reconstruction of Argentine rugby. "When we were invited to send a team to play in South Africa's Vodacom Cup, I knew we needed Huevo."

Huevo (egg), his nickname since he was very small given the shape of his head, came home and within days, with a squad he hadn't selected and knew little of, travelled east to spend four months in South Africa. He would return in 2011 (when the team were champions), 2012 and 2013. Hourcade was in charge of developing the home-based players for national coach Santiago



▲ **Breath of fresh air**  
Juan Imhoff breaks to score in the 43-20 World Cup win over Ireland

Phelan, either with the Pampas XV to play in South Africa or the Jaguars, the rebranded Argentina A side.

"I did not allow myself to dream about coaching *los Pumas* as it was a decision out of my hands and I refused to be frustrated. I was really happy doing what I was doing." He was also making sure his players enjoyed playing within the positive atmosphere he created.

In the national team, though, there was a simmering unrest that came to boiling point when Phelan resigned two months before the end of his contract in 2013. The Argentine rugby union (UAR) had made plans: Cheika was the prime candidate but the team needed to find an interim coach for the impending northern hemisphere

## "THE PLAN WAS TO PLAY WITH ALL OUR WEAPONS"

tour and Hourcade was summoned, initially as a caretaker. "It was a tough tour; difficult opponents and a team with players I did not know well."

Hourcade returned home having seen his squad lose 31-12 to England and 40-6 to Wales as well as beat Italy 19-14, but the UAR had been impressed with what they saw and decided to offer him the chance to stay until RWC 2015. In accepting, he made some tough choices that paid off. One was to take the captaincy from Juan Martín Fernández Lobbe and hand it to Agustín Creevy. "When Juan understood my motives, he became a true soldier and I can't thank him enough for his support."

And Creevy? "I knew him from the Pampas XV. I only told him to be himself. He is a great person and captain."

As for why so many players were used in the past couple of years, he says: "We had to grow the base and give younger players opportunities to test themselves against international opposition. We had a plan, which will now be totally different as we head into the next goal, to win RWC 2019."

"Whilst we had few games before England 2015, with entry to Super Rugby next year we'll have at least 27 first-class games (each year), including Tests; with experience, we can only grow."

The change in approach led to Hourcade having a public fallout with former lock Patricio Albacete,

### THE FACTS HOURCADE

**Age** 57 (7 June 1958)

**Born** Tucumán

**Position** Scrum-half

**Major coaching roles**

Argentina U21, Sevens,

Jaguars, Portugal

**Argentina record**

P30 W13 L17



who called him a liar last year. "It's all in the past; I know who I am and what I stand for," is all the coach will say. Albacete played only the first two Tests of Hourcade's tenure and the Pumas played the World Cup with two locks aged 20 and 22 who gave outstanding service.

"Los Pumas are in a place to enjoy; we dream of being here so when we get to this environment we should make sure it creates everlasting positive memories."

**T**hree big wins gave Hourcade the credibility he needed. After 17 games, the Pumas got their first win in the Rugby Championship, beating Australia at home in 2014. Fifty days later, France were beaten in Paris and in August 2015 South Africa were put to the sword in Durban, with the team's attacking flair to the fore. It was a strategy they then took into the World Cup.

"The game plan was simple: to play with all of our weapons. After a hard game against the All Blacks, in which we managed to play our game for long periods, we played Georgia, Tonga and Namibia, which gave us the opportunity to grow in confidence and in attacking volume, showcasing what we wanted to do.

"We try to play quicker breakdowns, no longer than three seconds, and for that you need fitness, continuity and a set of players who are capable of performing this way. The players got convinced of the Puma way and enjoyed playing with width and adventure. If they were not on board, it would have been much harder."

He describes the Ireland result as "a great win" and the tournament as a whole was a huge learning experience. He says: "I'm not alone. I have great coaches around me who make me better; it's never about one coach. We work ten times more than the opposition to prepare for a game; we have a lot of catching up to do, but entry into Super Rugby will add to our experience."

He's also picked up advice from friends like Heyneke Meyer and Cheika. "We learnt a lot from the way Cheika trains. We spent time with him and the Waratahs when we went to Australia with the Jaguars and he has always been open and friendly. I also like Joe Schmidt very much."

Convinced of what he wants and needs to do to make his team successful – their 49-31 win over the Barbarians last month was another clear demonstration of their attacking intent – he has stated that he will only sign with the UAR for two years. "Four years is a long period and I don't want to tie them to a contract. We'll see where we all are after 2017.

"We are heading into the unknown with Super Rugby. Even if I'm not going to coach that team, it will be a big task for all of Argentine rugby. There is natural wear and I want to be sure that I'm still able to deliver the best coaching Los Pumas deserve."

He's certainly done alright so far. **RW**



▲ Pair of aces Hourcade (left) with Agustín Creevy

PIC: GETTY IMAGES

▼ Seventh heaven Argentina ran in seven tries against the Baa-Baas at Twickenham last month



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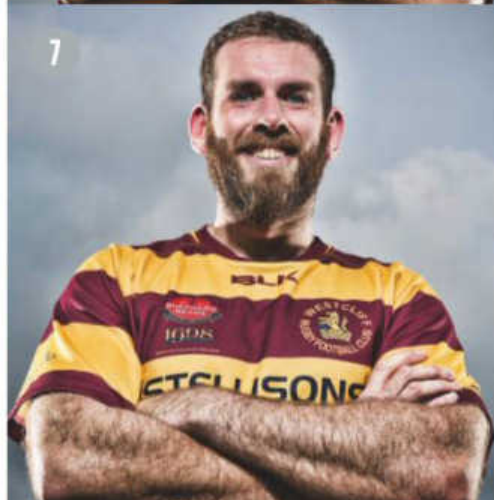
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WORDS KEVIN EASON // PICTURES JAMES CHEADLE

# GUESS WHO'S NEVER PLAYED RUGBY BEFORE...

Inspired by the World Cup to pick up an oval ball for the first time, Kevin Eason – number 11 – talks through his experiences of taking up the sport



**T**O BE honest, I've never really been into rugby. I went to a school that didn't play the game, I've hardly ever touched a rugby ball in my life and I'm not blessed with the genetics – 5ft 7in in trainers and nudging 11 and a half stone seemed a long way away from the giants I've seen on the box. So why give it a go now, aged 36?

My family have just moved to a new area, about an hour's drive from our old house. My wife and son have managed to make new friends with countless trips to nursery and toddler classes, but working five days a week means I never get the chance to meet new people. I've watched *School of Hard Knocks*, so I've seen how quickly rugby can bring people together. And with the buzz and optimism of the World Cup in the air, I'm inspired! I decide to →





→ join a local club and give it a proper go. I'm keen to learn a new sport and I want to meet new people. What's the worst that could happen?

## GETTING STARTED

It's half-time during Japan v South Africa (what a game!) and a good moment to begin my search for the lucky club to take this rugby virgin on. One of the dads at my son's swimming lesson earlier in the day had a Westcliff RFC T-shirt on, so that's a good place to start – a message from the rugby gods! That and the fact emblazoned on their website in capital letters is: 'New players welcome'.

I pick up the phone and gingerly make the call. "There's no way you'll be getting smashed in training – at least not yet," explains Dave Cole, the fourth-team captain of Westcliff Bulldogs, cheerfully. I chuckle nervously.

Watching the second half, I'm optimistic about training on Tuesday night. I'm starting to think that I'm going to be pretty good at this rugby lark. I'm not sure if this comes from the welcoming tone of the team captain or the gigantic efforts of the Japanese.

## TRAINING DAY

I open the front door to a not so welcoming sheet of rain – the sun was beaming when I got the train home an hour earlier. Running to the car, my mood shifts from optimism to nervousness. What are they going to be like? What am I going to be like? What if I break my leg?

During the ten-minute drive to the club and with the rain hammering down, I begin to wonder if I should turn back, say I got lost. No, I'm doing this. At least for tonight.

I spot three teams training as I head towards the pitch. One group are very young, too young. I walk on, my feet slipping on the soggy pitch. Why did I think it was a good idea to wear trainers? I'd have been better off in skis.



**Leading role** Lucas Stacey rallies his troops

In the distance, I notice a wave. It must be Dave. Up I slide to say my hellos. I feel like the new boy at school and notice very quickly that I'm also by far the smallest.

A game of touch is called. My first touch of a rugby ball is met by two long arms, a head and neck, quickly followed up by the rest of one guy's 16-odd stone heft as I'm slammed into the mud, skidding ten metres. Ouch.

I slowly get back up as Dave bellows: "It's touch rugby, Jack!" Apparently, he hadn't heard. I'm not happy. The next time he gets the ball I'm going to give him what he gave me, no holding back. It doesn't take long. I'm on my toes,



**Welcome home** The clubhouse of Westcliff Bulldogs



**Watching brief** Eason surveys the goings-on at a scrum



**Helping hand** Aaron O Maoilchiaraín has always given advice and (top) Shaun Du Plessis scores a try

with my head down, steaming towards him on a revenge mission. Wallop! I bounce backwards into the mud, my pride bruised. I've been given a rugby reality check.

After training, Dave invites everyone for a drink. Soaked through and covered in mud, I penguin-walk to the club bar and sink a beer. Dave and the players are all very welcoming, which surprises me a little – one football club I played for was so cliquey, I wasn't invited to a party even after I'd been training there for a month.

Lucas, the vice-captain and backs coach, says he sees me as a wing and describes what that entails. Dave jokes that he sees me as forward. I appreciate the banter; it makes me feel more relaxed and accepted.

Exhausted and a little unsure of the whole experience, I make my excuses and go home to explain to my wife how I got round eight players, scored a try under the posts and kicked a conversion and drop-goal to win! I decide to keep my failed revenge mission to myself.

## THE AFTERMATH

The next day I'm feeling a little tender around the edges and I'm unsure how I feel about rugby. It's a lot to take in and I don't really know if I even like it.

When I play football I don't think about what I'm doing half the time; it's instinctive. At rugby training, I was constantly thinking about what I should be doing, why and how. Plus, I was doing it with a whole bunch of new people in the pouring rain – it was very much a case of in at the deep end. There's no game on Saturday, so I have a while to think about whether I want to go back.

## TAKE TWO

A week on, the original positivity of the World Cup is fading, along with England's campaign. I've concluded that I'm not suited to the game; I'm old, small and weak. Then there's the potential of getting hurt and not having a clue what I'm doing. I'm going to give it a miss.

My wife has other ideas! "You should try it again," she says positively. "It's not raining tonight." A few people at work had said I should give it at least a couple of weeks, too. She's right. They're right. I should give it another go.

Reluctantly, I gather my kit and drive to the club. Immediately, I notice a lot more players. Last week there were eight, now there are about 25. I scan the new faces, a few walk up and shake my hand, and I curse myself for not doing it first. I'm only just the smallest this week.



We break up into forwards and backs. Within the backs group, we talk through moves and practise passing and running. Each time, someone takes the time to explain to me what we are doing and why. In the distance, the forwards are hunched over, pushing each other about and grunting. Another world! I'm more than happy running about trying to catch the ball.

We finish the session with a game of touch. I catch my first high ball – Mike Brown-esque – and score a try. I'm buzzing. Dave mentions they have a home game on Saturday and that I should come down – to watch I assume. What a difference a week makes.

## GAME ON

I had a text from Dave earlier in the week saying we should meet at 1.30pm, but typically I'm late. I follow the scent of Deep Heat and shyly enter the changing room, not really knowing what to do or how to act. There are more new faces, so I shuffle into the far corner. Most of the players from training say hello and Lucas chucks me some kit. Oh, so I wasn't here just to watch!

The game is a local derby: Westcliff v Southend. On the pitch, we link arms in a huddle before kick-off and the captain gives a passionate speech. I'm sucked in and surprisingly up for the game myself. I feel part of the team, even though I've only ever been to training twice.

Along with five other subs of different sizes and ages, I stand on the sidelines and watch. My new team-mates have done a tremendous job by half-time, taking the lead with a try. Things get a little tighter and more heated in the second half. A few substitutions are made and I'm half happy not to go on. The game is close and I don't want to let anyone down.

Fifteen minutes from the end, I get the nod to warm up. I worry that it's too soon and that I'm going to lose the game for the team. Southend only need a try to win.

Why am I coming on before the more experienced players? I've played for loads of Sunday league football teams where I've had to train for months before coming on as sub. Rugby is showing a special camaraderie and selflessness that I've not experienced in other sports.

Before I've even stepped onto the pitch, I feel I owe them something, that I can't let them down. On the pitch, James, the full-back, and centres Sam and Kristian offer me words of advice and shout instructions to help me

with positioning. I'm clattered into the mud on a couple of occasions but I think I'm holding my own, for now.

In the final few minutes, Southend are getting closer and closer to our try-line. Then the ball comes out wide... Opposite me is a fella double my size, running at full speed. I know I've got to stop him; if I don't he'll score a try and we'll lose. "Grab the legs!" is ringing in my ears.

I have to make the tackle. Teeth gritted, I do my best to lock my arms around his flying legs. He slips out of my grip and I stumble to the ground. Pathetic. I'm gutted.

I turn to watch him scoring – but to my surprise he's on the floor just behind me. Apparently I did enough for him to trip out of the tackle and land on the floor; then we'd got the ball back. Thank Christ! I hadn't let everyone down. Most of the team give me a pat on the back and I'm made up. The whistle blows and I've played my first-ever game of rugby.

I love it. We won the game and beer is flowing in the changing room. Music is blasting out and people are dancing. Dave gives our opponents some jugs of beer too. What a great gesture. It's an honour to be part of a sport like this and involved in a team like this.

## RUGBY CONVERT

I've now been training with Westcliff Bulldogs for three months. I started my first match in a friendly against Chelmsford, played my first away game at Ilford and I'd like to think I'm a regular at training.

I'm thankful the World Cup inspired me to join a club and I'm proud to be a Bulldog. Everyone has been fantastic in helping me on my rugby journey. I've been humbled by their patience and kindness. I love all sports and play most badly to be fair. But rugby is different. I've learnt it's about skill, honour, passion, pride and respect, for your team-mates and your opponents.

For anyone who wants to get fit and meet new people, I'd massively recommend rugby. It's been a whole new experience, one I want to keep going with for as long as my legs and the team will take me. I'll admit I'm not very good, but I'm getting more confident and want to get better and better as a player.

These are my final thoughts on rugby:

1. I have a new-found respect for anyone who plays the game. It's a tough sport.
2. There's a constant reminder in people's actions that things should be done for the greater good of the game – like giving a complete novice ten minutes in a local derby!
3. The social side is brilliant – post-match dinner and drinks, the togetherness of the team and respect for the opposition.

I look forward to the day when I can take my son training with the minis at Westcliff. I can't think of a higher recommendation than that. **RW**

▼ **Stop sign**  
Eason feels the force of a big tackle



**"HE SLIPS OUT OF MY GRIP AND I STUMBLE TO THE GROUND. PATHETIC. I'M GUTTED"**

**Making ground**  
David Vallance in action



## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Are you keen to take up rugby for the first time? Or want to return to the game? Visit [findrugby.com](http://findrugby.com) to locate your nearest club in England, or head to your national union's website for info.

# STEPHEN JONES

RUGBY'S MOST OUTSPOKEN AND INFLUENTIAL JOURNALIST



## “It’s time to stop the inquisition”

Let’s put an end to the salary cap accusations and embrace the chance to bring more big names to the Aviva Premiership, says Stephen Jones

**N**OT SO long ago, it was announced by Premiership Rugby that they were holding an investigation into possible breaches of the salary cap. In other words, some clubs may be overspending on salaries. This would be in defiance of what is not a law, by the way, but a gentlemen’s agreement. Regular readers may have noticed that I can get rather put out by certain issues in rugby, but here and now I have to say that the salary cap is not one of them. I just couldn’t leap into the pulpit as if some horrible cataclysm has occurred.

Every company spends what it can and if it spends too much, tough; it is their own fault. I also believe that any salary cap is so ridiculously difficult to police that you may as well save money on policing. Yes, of course we all want the smaller clubs to keep up, we want clubs to come steaming up through the ranks to the top of the

Premiership, as have the brilliant Exeter Chiefs. Of course, the success of any club should not depend too much on the depths of the pockets of the owners.

And I do grasp that rugby’s ethical code means that no one should take an unfair advantage and also that the playing fields should be as level as possible. If there are moneymen who spent too much and then hid it, shame on them, but it is only a probation offence, not the guillotine. Sometimes, accusations surface because of jealousy, not overspending.

In any case, the Premiership Rugby investigation ended in a complete anticlimax and a storm of fury. Premiership Rugby announced that no one had been found breaking the salary cap, although there were a few issues regarding “access to information and commercial arrangements”. You do not have to be a legal eagle to offer the view that an issue over “access to information” sounded an awful lot like hiding some payments. And that “commercial arrangements” may well have been construed as the payment of players through the back door by other companies.

The Premiership Rugby people also said that “confidential settlements” had been entered into, but

► **Star attraction**  
Wallaby centurion  
George Smith joined  
Wasps this season





→ deny that this was a phrase used because the word 'fine' was too explosive, hinting as it does at guilt. It was like coming to the end of a long film and finding that the plot petered out into nothingness.

However, we had to take the word of Premiership Rugby that there were no breaches and that what was a bit of a secret operation all round was secret because of legal requirements. They would not name any club who had as much as sneezed out of place.

The popular view – or rather, the unpopular view – was that two clubs had broken the cap but had somehow escaped on semantics. The two clubs were not named. This set off a pack of hounds desperate to find out the identities. A kind of Spanish Inquisition was set up in which all clubs were badgered one by one to declare that they were not the miscreants. Frankly, this process was almost as distasteful for me as anyone who had hidden the payments and got away with it. That's just my opinion.

Mark McCafferty, whose career at Premiership Rugby has now been completely written off about ten times but who deservedly continues to sit at the helm, declared that it was time to move forward. Further constraints and systems will be put in place to spot miscreants in the future, although instead of fines there would be "financial adjustments". Lovers of semantics then dived in to try to spot the difference between those two concepts. But let us hope for the sake of a Premiership above reproach that the cost of "financial adjustments" turns out to be the same as the cost of fines.

McCafferty then revealed that the salary cap will go up from the current £5.5m to £6.5m next season and £7m in 2017-18. There is also the possibility to spend a little more because there are now International Player Credits, with an allowance of up to £80,000 per player for those who are absent for long periods of the season due to national duties. If a player is ruled out with injury for 12 weeks or more, clubs can also recruit a replacement for the rest of that season, with their salary sitting outside the cap.

Of course, clubs can already sign two so-called marquee players whose salaries are not included in the cap too. This means that, if they can afford them, clubs can bring in two real crowd-pullers or two galacticos and



**Rich kids**  
Toulon have won three European Cups

## THE FACTS

### SALARY CAP

#### Base levels

£5.5m in 2015-16, £6.5m in 2016-17, £7m in 2017-18

#### Home-grown Player Credits

Included in base levels is a max of £500k (2016-17) and £600k (2017-18) for players who have graduated from the club academy. £50,000 per home-grown player

#### Two marquee players

These salaries sit outside the cap. One of the two must be new to the Premiership or not have played in the league for at least 12 months

#### International Player Credits

In addition to the base levels, clubs can utilise a credit per international player who is absent during Premiership/European matches – this credit, applied at a per-match rate and with a max of £80,000 available, will enable the club to bring in additional cover

#### Injury dispensations

Each club has a separate £400,000 cap for players brought in to replace those injured for 12 weeks or more

not have their salaries counted. This is excellent.

I actually feel that most of the clubs have not made the most of this wonderful opportunity. They have decided simply to take out the salary of their highest-earning existing player – probably the fly-half or tighthead prop – even if he is home-grown and somewhat unremarkable.

The marquee players clause should have seen outstanding, box-office outsiders coming into the English game, to alleviate the shortage of exotica caused by the need to field a certain number of English-qualified players. As I've said so often, the Premiership is an event in itself; it must stand alone and while it is fantastic if it does produce a galaxy of players for England, it also needs to make money in its own right and it needs to entertain. Only the cynical would add that England have not the faintest idea what to do with all their qualified players, in any case.

The parade of all-time greats in the French league causes controversy but the mums and dads and kids want to go to watch them. What Jonny Wilkinson did for Toulon, you could not express in words, figures or finance. It's been the same kind of thing with Marcos Ayerza at Leicester, Nick Evans at Harlequins, Francois Louw at Bath and, further back, Wayne Shelford at Northampton and Terry Fanolua at Gloucester.

In two years' time, with the increase in the salary cap, at least the English clubs at the very top end will be competing harder with the moneyed French clubs. It is too long since an English club won Europe's top prize, and you would hope that the recruiters in the Premiership show a little more vision and a little more speculation in buying players.

Never forget that the best overseas players are a wonderful influence on young Englishmen; things rub off. Already, George Smith has become a favourite at Wasps for all the time he devotes to academy players and the younger element of the squad.



**Money in the bank**  
Nick Evans is a marquee player at Harlequins





The only precaution is that recruiters must find out if the incoming players still have a gallop in them, and rule them out if there is any suspicion they are coming simply to feather their pension nests. These days clubs must delve deep into psyche and motivation – Toulon do it so well that of all the masses of great players they have signed, only a tiny proportion have been poor.

As for the salary cap itself, on balance it should stay. I want Newcastle and Sale and London Irish and, perhaps next season, Bristol to take part in the Premiership on a level playing field. The cap makes it so much easier for those teams without the safety net of a huge benefactor. Affection for the underdog extends to affection for those who are not so pecuniarily blessed. America's National Football League want a level playing field so the worst teams get the first draft picks the following season.

Possibly, some English clubs have got away with things these past few years. Certainly, if as a rough guide you take two or three clubs and add up all their outstanding players and divide the salary cap by that number, then their average salaries do appear to be suspiciously low. If anyone did escape scot-free, then there is a massive moral obligation on them to toe the

line next time, to stick rigidly to the new caps, without excuses, without any dodgy commercial arrangements and with a complete transparency. No laws have been broken but, as I say, agreements and ethics may well have been dumped in the search for success.

Finally, the Premiership is meant to be a form of entertainment, it grows year on year, attendances are expanding still and so are grounds. The principle of promotion and relegation from the league is still there, as it always should be, so there is room for a

big investor in other parts of the country to join the party.

If all that money is to be spent and if salary costs are to be higher and higher, then the

English top flight should at the same time be more ambitious and more choosy – those two things are not exclusive. Money used well is the lifeblood of the Premiership, and it is probably now time to stop looking for scamps and culprits, to stop the inquisition, and to crack on into the future.

Either that or some stunningly brilliant forensic detective, who would put Sherlock Holmes and the whole of MI5 in the shade, should be brought in. In their absence, all we can do is play on. **rw**

## THE TOP FLIGHT SHOULD BE MORE AMBITIOUS

**New clause**  
Clubs can buy players to cover internationals like Mako Vunipola from next season

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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The community spirit in **Oyonnax** has seen the club exceed expectations, so we

**L**ET'S START with a few facts about Oyonnax. It's in the Rhône-Alpes region of France, 60 miles north-east of Lyon. It's built on the river Ange and lies in a valley surrounded by the Jura Mountains. It's hot in the summer, cold in the winter, and has a museum devoted to combs.

Oh, and it also has a very good rugby club. It wasn't always the case. Founded in 1909, Oyonnax potted along for decades in the Fédérale (regional) league of French rugby. It wasn't until the turn of the millennium that Oyonnax began to get serious about things, climbing into ProD2 and then ascending into the giddy heights of the Top 14 for the 2013-14 season.

Seasoned observers brashly predicted a rapid return to ProD2, confident that a town of Oyonnax's size (with a population of 22,500, it's the smallest town to produce a Top 14 club) had neither the rugby nor financial muscle to sustain its place in the elite.

WORDS  
GAVIN MORTIMER  
MAIN PICTURE  
GEORGE ROBSON

True, they struggled in their first season, avoiding the drop by the skin of their teeth as the illustrious Biarritz and Perpignan suffered the ignominy of relegation in May 2014. But having taken a season to adapt to the Top 14, their second campaign in the top flight surpassed all expectation. In a spectacular run at the start of 2015, Oyonnax beat Montpellier, Stade Français, Castres and Toulouse on successive weekends, a winning streak that culminated in a top-six finish and qualification for this season's European Champions Cup.

Oyonnax's 'reward' for such a feat was to be drawn alongside three of Europe's powerhouses in Toulouse, Ulster and Saracens. By the time the draw was made, however, Oyonnax had already recruited a gang of solid reinforcements, including former Harlequins lock George Robson, Eamonn Sheridan, once of Leinster and London Irish, and two ex-internationals in Welshman Nicky Robinson and All Black Piri Weepu.

They arrived at a dressing room ruled by Olivier Azam, himself a new arrival at Oyonnax having replaced Christophe



Eyes on the prize  
Sheridan chases  
the ball v Montpellier





asked George Robson and Eamonn Sheridan to give us an insight into life there

Urios as head coach in the summer, but his reign didn't last long. The former Gloucester hooker was sacked before the start of the Champions Cup after the club lost six of their first eight league games and has been replaced by Johann Authier, just 33, who is promoted from the academy. It will be a huge step up for the young coach who retired only last season after six years as Oyonnax's scrum-half.

Azam's departure came as a shock to Robson, whose respect for him remains undimmed, and he describes the upheaval as "a peculiar chain of events". Just one day after Azam was sacked, Paris experienced the terrorist outrages that caused the postponement of all European matches in France, including their fixture against Ulster. "Oyonnax went into lockdown basically," explains Robson. They kicked off their Euro campaign the following week in Toulouse, losing 24-18, and face Saracens back-to-back this month.

As for learning the local lingo, the new arrivals have lessons twice a week and are making progress, although it helps, of course, that they have minds as broad as their shoulders. "You must learn the language because that opens doors for you," says Robson. "If it's not good,



**Wet and wild**  
Robson during a pre-season exercise

at least have a go and they'll respect you. Turn the situation round: a French player joins an English club and expects everyone to speak French... he'd quickly be told where to go!"

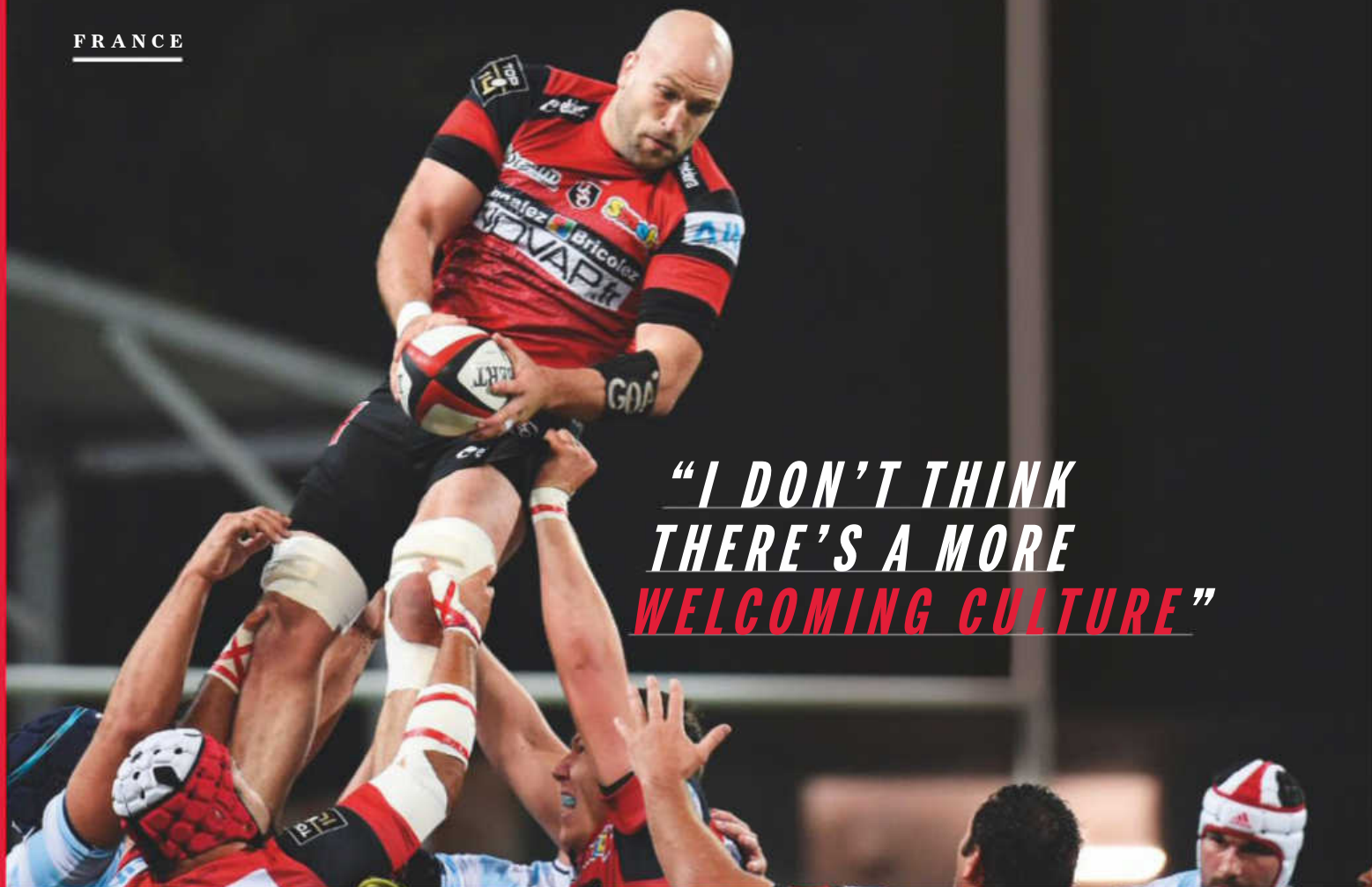
Sheridan agrees. "You have to accept the French do things differently and then just embrace it," says the 26-year-old. "After a few weeks we understood that no one is in much of a rush and that there are times in the day when no shops are open. It takes a bit of getting used to, but once you do it's fine. The advice I

would give is don't come to France and expect them to change to suit you; you have to change."

It didn't take Robson long to discover the difference between the Quins way and the Oyonnax approach. "My first skills session couldn't have been a greater contrast to Quins," explains Robson, who spent ten years with the London club and came up from the academy with Chris Robshaw and Mike Brown. "I had to scrummage at tighthead, loosehead and hooker so that I understood what they went through. At Quins I would be spin passing out of my left hand ten metres. I'm not saying there's a right and a

## THE FACTS OYONNAX

**Founded** 1909  
**Ground** Stade Charles-Mathon  
**Titles** Fédérale 1 (2001), ProD2 (2013)  
**Twitter** @OyonnaxRugby



***“I DON’T THINK  
THERE’S A MORE  
WELCOMING CULTURE”***

→ wrong way, but here there is a culture of the scrum, a respect for it, that’s woven into the fabric of the club.”

Another striking contrast between the two rugby cultures is Saturday, when, says Sheridan, “emotion leads the whole day”. Robson elaborates: “At Oyonnax we get to the ground quite early. There is no music in the changing room, no laughing, just dead silence. It couldn’t be any more alien to what it was like at Quins where there was music, people laughing and joking.

“At Oyonnax everyone is silent and that atmosphere just builds and builds until kick-off, by which time there is a lot of emotion. Some of the French lads before home games completely lose it, but it sucks you in as a player as it’s so different from the Anglo-Saxon approach.”

Sheridan will never forget his first home game for Oyonnax, against Bordeaux-Bègles. The changing rooms are under a metal-framed stand and when the players emerge into the tunnel they are in sight of fans.

▲ **Riding high**  
Robson is enjoying his experiences in France

“When the crowd start stamping their feet, it’s so loud you can’t hear a thing,” he says. “I was quite shocked by the noise, and did my best to pretend it was normal. But you could see it was getting to the Bordeaux players.”

Both Sheridan and Robson chose Oyonnax because they wanted a fresh challenge and they believe in the club ethos. Not just the rugby that the club want to play – which Robson describes as structured but with a flexibility that precludes predictability – but what the town represents. “When I came to have a look at the club with my agent I met the board and they were quite full on because they want to know what you’re like as a person and if you will fit in with the organisation,” he explains. “They emphasised it is a family club with a unique environment... I immediately appreciated the spirit of the place and I didn’t want to pass up the opportunity to come here for a couple of years.”

Before that first home game against Bordeaux, the Oyonnax president told the squad something of the club’s history and that of the town’s. That during the war Oyonnax had been a fierce hub of resistance against the Germans and that the stadium was named after a former player who had died in the war, Charles Mathon.

“Now I’m in France I understand why teams play much better at home,” says Sheridan. “It’s not that away sides don’t try, it’s the home side defending their territory. As players you are constantly made aware of the town’s honour. You go to the barber and he tells you, ‘If you don’t beat so and so, you better die on the pitch!’”

Robson lives in a village just outside Oyonnax, a town famous for its production of plastics, and says he’s



**Heavy metal**  
The tunnel at Stade Charles-Mathon



become something of a celebrity since his arrival, although not in the sense of opening supermarkets or appearing on local TV. "I get my neighbours leaving out vegetables for me or offering to walk the dog, and when I pop into the local butchers, he'll let me know if I've played well or not! I got my car washed recently and the man who owns the wash used to play for the club and coaches the juniors. Everyone in the town has a link to the club and I don't think there's a more welcoming culture, provided you buy into it, try with the language and earn their respect on the pitch."

It would be a surprise if Oyonnax qualified from their Champions Cup pool but also something of a shock if they didn't claim a scalp or two in the three home matches on their artificial pitch. Toulouse have yet to win at Oyonnax in the Top 14 and last season eventual champions Stade Français were thrashed 33-6 at the Stade Charles-Mathon. Saracens visit this month



▲ Walk tall Players enjoy the picturesque setting

## "THE TOWN THRIVES ON DAVID AND GOLIATH SITUATIONS"

and Sheridan says: "The town thrives on the David and Goliath situations. They like nothing better than welcoming the big boys and then turning them over."

Robson agrees that a club Oyonnax's size is always likely to prioritise the Top 14 over the Champions Cup for financial reasons, but the town recognises the significance of playing in Europe. "The Champions Cup is massive because the people of Oyonnax are so proud of their team and for them to be on the big stage and people to know where the town is, that's huge," he says.

"For us as players, it's a great chance to give it our best shot but we're under no illusions. We're up against Saracens, the best side in England for some time, Ulster, a giant of Irish rugby, and Toulouse with all their titles. But we're going to enjoy the experience and show that we may be a small town but we've got a big heart." EW

▼ All in it together Oyonnax are looking to bounce back after a poor start to the season



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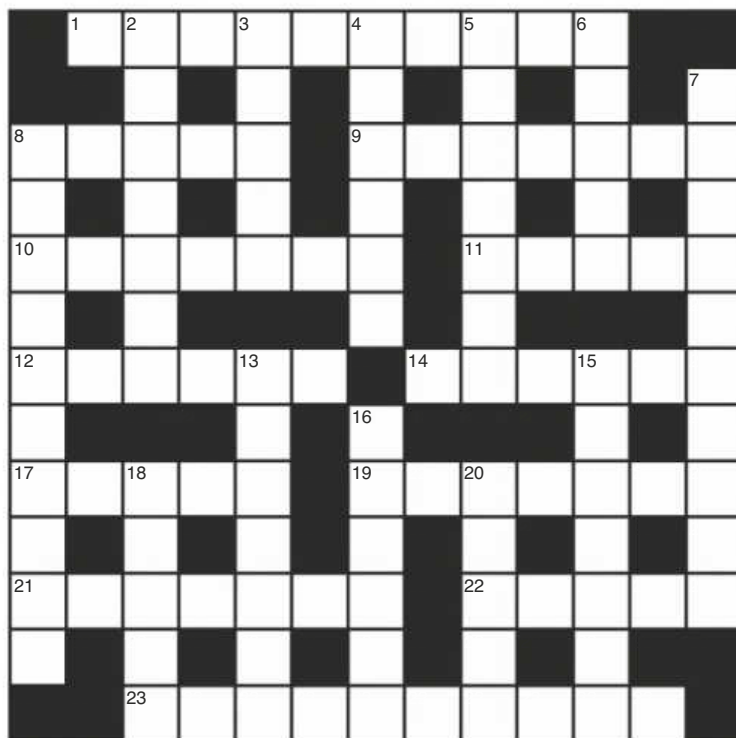
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## ACROSS

- 1 Fail to register – like Scotland and New Zealand at Murrayfield in 1964? (4,1,5)
- 8 Juan Martín Fernández - - - , one of the all-time great Pumas (5)
- 9 Vasily Artyemyev was the first one to play in the English Premiership (7)
- 10 The most difficult thing is knowing when not to blow it, says referee Nigel Owens (7)
- 11 Marcus Di - - - , ex-Scotland centre who's head coach of Watsonians (5)
- 12 And 4 Down. Springbok great washes her black rugs... (6,6)
- 14 ...while - - - Erasmus, a Bok from 1997-2001, works for his union as a high-performance manager (6)
- 17 Director of rugby who branded criticism by Lawrence Dallaglio for demoting Chris Robshaw as Quins captain as 2 Down (5)
- 19 - - - Ma'afu, Fiji prop named after a Wallaby legend – and his eldest son is called this too! (7)
- 21 Carlo - - - , former Italy lock who has worked for the BBC (3,4)
- 22 D Care tore about – he was sprinting (5)
- 23 Leicester's Ben White, Newcastle's Tom Penny and Exeter's Luke Cowan-Dickie, for example (10)

## DOWN

- 2 Thieves tipped - - - over the Saltash RFC floor during a clubhouse raid in October (7)
- 3 Tony - - - , who sat on Dylan Hartley's last RFU disciplinary panel, likes cereal grain (5)
- 4 See 12 Across (6)
- 5 They've lost all three Alpine International derbies, the last one by 17-3 in 2006 (7)
- 6 He made ten clean breaks in this year's World Cup, the same as fellow Springbok Bryan Habana (5)
- 7 Out-of-hand kicking style that has usurped the spiral punt (3-4-3)
- 8 Ex-England captain who helped set a new world record – for the fastest interception of a rugby pass (5,5)
- 13 Resembled a Lomu? Na! But this Christian won 16 caps for Japan (7)
- 15 John - - - , the British & Irish Lions' tour manager for 2017 (7)
- 16 Alastair - - - , ex-Scotland lock who once said he played his whole career "enveloped in red mist" (6)
- 18 Once of Preston Grasshoppers, now the Sale full-back (5)
- 20 Nils - - - , Sarries player who tweeted of England players: "Incredibly hard to achieve great things when you are constantly being doubted" (5)



### THE WINNER OF THE NOVEMBER CROSSWORD IS DIANE DAVIES FROM NEWTOWN, POWYS

**ACROSS** 1. Kingston 4. Scan 8. Ito 9. Salle 10. Rod 11. Bear pit 12. Ideal 13. Andre Watson 17. Bayou 18. Ben Tune 20. Era 21. Actor 22. Alo 23. Lady 24. Maitland. **DOWN** 1. Knibbs 2. Noosa 3. Owlet 5. Cordero 6. Nadolo 7. Devin Toner 9. Superhuman 14. Neyland 15. Abseil 16. Second 18. Botha 19. Umaga.

The crossword winner will receive a case of the legendary **Hobgoblin ruby beer**, from the Wychwood brewery ([www.wychwood.co.uk](http://www.wychwood.co.uk)). Like them on Facebook – Hobgoblin beer. The closing date for entries is Wednesday 6 January. Results will appear in our March 2016 issue. Send your entries and address to: Rugby World Crossword, 7th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU. Full competition rules are on P14. Entrants must be over 18. **Compiled by Alan Pearey.**



## DON'T MISS NEXT MONTH

# A NEW YEAR WISH-LIST!

Stephen Jones reveals what he'd like to see from rugby in 2016

## PLUS

- Exclusive big-name interviews
- Grass-roots clubs news
- Latest from the sevens circuit
- Sensational photos
- Technical advice and tips

**Sporting potential** The Rio Olympics should be huge for rugby next year



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# RUGBY FOCUS

A round-up of news from the clubs, sevens and women's circuits



IMAGE: GARETH PITMAN

**Rising high**  
Matthew Creel wins a lineout for Abertillery BG

ONLY IN  
RUGBY  
WORLD

## Team of the Month Abertillery BG

**W**E'RE OFTEN told of the benefits of using local produce and Abertillery BG are certainly reaping the rewards of having plenty of home-grown talent in their ranks.

Back in 2003-04 a lack of numbers forced Abertillery to stop playing, but teaming up with Blaenau Gwent RFC helped the club get back on their feet, they added BG to their name and are now riding high in SWALEC League Two East. The key? Local players.

Credit here must go to Mike James and

Paul Rossiter, who rebuilt the club's youth set-up. They have players from U7 to U19, and the hard work is now bearing fruit with the majority of the first team in their early twenties.

Those youngsters struggled last term, but the experience gained has put them in a far better position now and they scored 39 tries in winning their first eight league games. Aled Penn, a 6ft 3in, 16st wing with plenty of gas, scored 11 of those tries, but the big difference has been up front.

"Last season other sides worked out

that we had young forwards so would maul and scrummage against us," says vice-chairman John Fox. "Now we've got four good props in Graham Heath, Dafydd Cripps, 19-year-old Jack Woodland and Matthew Phelps, so teams can't bully us. And we've got a cracking set of backs."

With October wins over Pontypool United (28-24), Croesyceiliog (37-9) and Talywain (60-21), Abertillery BG are our Team of the Month and **win 23 Apatchy bootbags** (left). If your side merits the November award, email [rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com](mailto:rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com) to tell us why. Include a high-res pic.

### CONTACT

Email your club's news stories and photos to *Rugby World Clubs* Editor Michael Austin at [aus231@aol.com](mailto:aus231@aol.com) or call him on 01400 282 189.





# Bristol is ideal next step for Borthwick

The former Japan coach tells RW's Owain Jones about his new challenge

**A** SK OBSERVERS for their team of the World Cup, and many will answer, without missing a beat, "Japan". They stunned the rugby world with their ambition and skill during the tournament, and while coach Eddie Jones received most of the plaudits for engineering three wins out of four, including that memorable victory over South Africa, there was a sizeable English footprint making its mark in the shadows.

Step forward Steve Borthwick, the former England captain who played in 57 Tests and had been working with ex-Saracens coach Jones since 2012. His Far Eastern journey started on a part-time basis but he went full-time at the end of his playing days, hopping on a plane at Heathrow the morning after his last-ever game – Saracens' 2014 Premiership final defeat by Northampton.

He is now plotting Bristol's escape route from the Greene King IPA Championship, but it would be remiss not to start with his Japan heroics. "Ah, it was a fantastic experience," he says modestly. "The work that went into the project and attention to detail was remarkable, but most of all you have to give credit to the effort and discipline of the players."

The former Bath and Saracens talisman, who played nearly 450 first-class games, said the successful campaign was a credit to Jones's ambition. "All along Eddie said he wanted to create new history for Japan because their World Cup record had been woeful. They'd only won one game, in 1991, and not one player in the squad had experienced winning a World Cup game."

With a record TV audience of 25m for the Samoa game, Borthwick and Jones achieved their aim of making the Japanese public proud. "We set a goal of reaching the quarter-finals and unfortunately we didn't make it, but Eddie also said he wanted to be



## QUICK-FIRE PROFILE

**Name** Steve Borthwick  
**Age** 36 (12 Oct 1979)  
**Birthplace** Carlisle  
**Married?** Yes, two sons  
**TV show** *The Blacklist*, it's an American crime drama  
**Last book read** *Winners* by Alastair Campbell is by my bed. I'm picking up things  
**Toughest opponent** Danny Grewcock before he came to Bath. He was so physical  
**Person you'd like to have met** Winston Churchill. He led a very interesting life, and had incredible leadership qualities  
**Team-mate you'd like to be** Schalk Brits. He has an infectious personality  
**Other sport you'd like to do professionally** I do like my football. I'm a Preston North End fan. I also like my Aussie Rules

the team of the World Cup and many would argue we were just that."

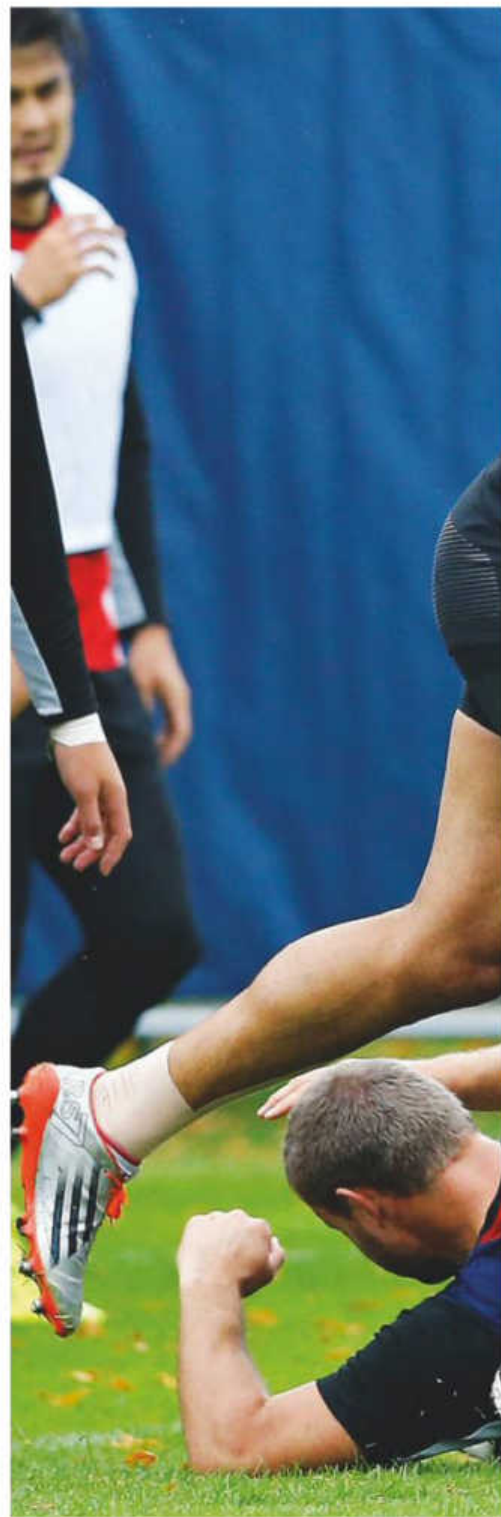
Borthwick also has fond memories of the time he spent exploring Japan, saying: "We lived in Tokyo but in the summer it's incredibly hot, so we travelled to the mountains where they

had rugby camps. You'd come off the bullet train and on every flat piece of ground you'd see a rugby pitch. We stayed in a ski chalet and instead of picking up ski boots, you'd pick up your rugby boots. Wonderful."

Just weeks into his role as forwards coach at Bristol, Borthwick is starting to settle back in the South-West, having studied at Bath University before turning pro at the Rec. "I'm not one to sit around. I was keen to get cracking. I've always prided myself on my work ethic and I hope I've carried that into my coaching career. My remit is to develop the players and improve them in any way I can."

As for the specifics of how he can help the team take that next step and win promotion, the Cumbrian says passing on his hard-earned experience will be paramount. "I haven't been here long but I can see we have a really ambitious bunch who are keen to learn. The Championship is a tough league with some battle-worn packs. We need a strong set-piece to get us where we want to be this season and the contact area is key. Bristol prides itself on the strength and dynamism of the pack and I'm eager to continue that philosophy."

Borthwick is well aware of Bristol's play-off hoodoo but says the project at Ashton Gate, working with former England coach Andy Robinson, was too good to turn down. "We have to earn the right to be in the Premiership and to do that we have to work tremendously hard. It's an ambitious club with high expectations thanks to



a large and passionate supporter base. However we do it, we just need to get over the line."

As for what Borthwick believes he's learnt from his Japanese sojourn, he says it's all in the planning. "Being successful is down to preparation and attention to detail. There's a saying, 'You have to be in the best shape to hit the gate' and it's true. I've had my highs and lows, and hopefully I can translate that for the players."

There's a phalanx of former Test stars like Gavin Henson, Dwayne Peel

► **Getting stuck in**  
 Training with Japan during RWC 2015





#### CHILDHOOD RUGBY HERO

I've always loved to learn from players, so I looked up to the great Wallaby John Eales. He was technically gifted


#### SURPRISING FACT

I wrote a dissertation on 'Developing leadership in sport'. I was fortunate to speak to high-profile cricket coaches who gave up their time. I love learning

#### RUGBY FUNNY

I played schoolboy rugby with David Flatman. Flats was a tremendous player but his calves were so big he couldn't pull his socks up, which made me chuckle

and Tom Varndell in the squad, but Borthwick says it's important Bristol retain a local identity at their core. "Take Joe Joyce, our young lock. He's a local boy who is so passionate about the club. He is desperate to do well and plays with pride. That's the sort of attitude we want with everyone attached to the club."

Bristol will be only too aware that they have attracted a coach with a burgeoning reputation. And in their quest for top-flight rugby, they may have just found the missing link. 



### NEWS ROUND-UP

**JOLLY JOSH** Yorkshire Carnegie flanker Josh Bainbridge (right) was Championship Player of the Month for October. The 19-year-old scored five tries against Bristol.

**CHRISTMAS GIFT** Former player Steve Tomlin has profiled 46 players and four coaches in his book *Cornish Pirates*



*Legends*. Priced £12.99, it covers both the pro and amateur eras. You can order a copy by emailing [zoe.leray@cornish-pirates.com](mailto:zoe.leray@cornish-pirates.com)

**FRESH FACES** Glasgow's George Horne, Andrew Davidson and Robbie Fergusson, and Jack Cosgrove, of Edinburgh, have joined London Scottish on loan.

**NAME CHANGE** Moseley will start the 2016-17 season as Birmingham Moseley, the change coming into effect on 1 June.



# Spence gears up for Six Nations defence

The powerful forward is central to Ireland's plans, says RW's Ali Donnelly

**S**OPHIE SPENCE, the World Player of the Year nominee, is reflecting on Ireland's 8-3 loss to England at the Stoop in her country's first-ever autumn International last month.

Ireland capped a host of new players and were close to snatching a first away win over England, with the result enough for Spence to conclude that next year's Six Nations is wide open.

"We're defending champions but I wouldn't make us favourites," she says. "That game against England and our loss to France last year shows there's not much between the sides. All of the teams involved have gone through a lot of change over the last year and the Six Nations is bang in the middle of the lead up to the Olympics (sevens) so we're all without key backs.

"For us, players like Jen Murphy and Ashleigh Baxter would be big losses, but we've been hit by retirements too, so there's a lot of work for us to do."

Since her debut in 2012, just a year after she took up the game, the Newcastle native whose mother is from Lisburn has matured into a world-class forward, comfortable at lock or blindside. Her World Cup performances in 2014 were backed up by outstanding efforts in last season's triumphant Six Nations, and she was nominated for Women's Player of the Year, an award won by New Zealand's Kendra Cocksedge.

Now residing in Dublin, Spence will be a vital cog in the Irish machine heading into the 2017 World Cup. And she was pleased in many ways with Ireland's efforts against England.

"We capped nine new players so it was good preparation for the Six Nations and players got a taste of the level that is required. I remember Joy Neville telling me before my first cap that the level is totally different – that you'd spend your first game cramping up and she was right, so those girls had a chance to see what it's like."

Ireland will continue their Six Nations



## QUICK-FIRE PROFILE

**Name** Sophie Spence

**Nickname** Spence

**Club** Old Belvedere

**Age** 28 (26 Feb 1987)

**Twitter** @Spence\_87

**Personality** Sarcastic, funny and kind

**TV show** I don't watch a lot but I'd say *House*

**Last book read** *Legacy* – about the All Blacks

**Favourite male player**

Sean O'Brien – I love the way he carries and he has a ruthlessness about him

**Other sport you'd like to do as a pro** Snowboarding!

**Day job** DCU Rugby Development Officer

**Best rugby moment** The Grand Slam was massive but beating New Zealand at the 2014 World Cup is right up there

preparations with a training game against Wales in January and Spence will be at the heart of it, having moved to Dublin in 2013 to work part-time and dedicate as much time as possible to being the best player she can.

"Moving over was a huge decision for me. I initially moved to try to be part of the sevens set-up and while that didn't work out, I loved living in Dublin and it was the right time to be around to prepare for the 2014 World Cup. It's hard when you're an exile and travelling back and forth – you can't help but feel not as much a part of it as when you're training with the girls day in, day out."

Her relocation from Newcastle has an added bonus: the chance to see much more of the family she has in Belfast. And she's in a good position to assess the difference between the women's game in Ireland and England.

"I think the standard at club level isn't as high here yet as the English Premiership. The issue here is that women take it up quite late so levels will vary. The pathways are not advanced and we don't have an U20 team for girls to aspire to. There's loads of talent here and a lot happening, but there's more to do."

While Spence is not part of the Irish sevens programme, she has played in the World Series and took huge positives from the experience.

"The fitness was very tough – I'm not sure I could do it now!

The major benefit was spending time with experienced players like Lynne Cantwell and Jeanette Feighery. They gave me massive insight into the game and I used them to learn as much as I could."

Her short-term focus is on the Six Nations and the World Cup in Ireland in 2017, then she'll reassess. "I'd like to do some travelling at some point but it really depends on what happens

► **Full steam ahead**  
Spence on the charge against Scotland



job-wise. Working part-time means I have to be careful with money but I don't have a mad social life given the training and I spend most of my life in tracksuits. Put it this way, I don't spend a lot of time shopping!

"It's not forever and not everyone gets the opportunity to play for their country, so I need to do the best I can in the time I have."

Spence works as a Rugby Development Officer at Dublin City University, but she could be playing for Toulouse alongside two of her





### BEST THING ABOUT RUGBY

The culture we stand for and the feeling you get from playing for one another and giving everything on the field

### FAVOURITE WOMEN'S PLAYER

Fiona Coghlan. The best captain I've had and a massive mentor. She led by example – first on the pitch, last off – and understood everyone's strengths

### EMBARRASSING MOMENT

Playing Italy in the Grand Slam decider (in 2013), I started jumping up and down as I thought we'd scored, but we were a good five metres out

Ireland team-mates Heather O'Brien and Paula Fitzpatrick, who made the move earlier this year.

"I initially went over with them to look at it. I considered it strongly and thought it was a good opportunity, but I'd just got my job here and had already moved countries, so the idea of packing up and going again just wasn't quite right for me."

Old Belvedere will be delighted a French move didn't appeal just yet, as there's a lot more to come from Spence, for club and country. **rw**



## NEWS ROUND-UP

**BANK ON LLOYD** A hat-trick from wing Rhona Lloyd helped Scotland beat Spain 34-10 in Madrid after a week-long training camp, which received funding from the Erasmus+ European Commission scheme.

**FALLING SHORT** There are only four tournaments on the 2015-16 Women's



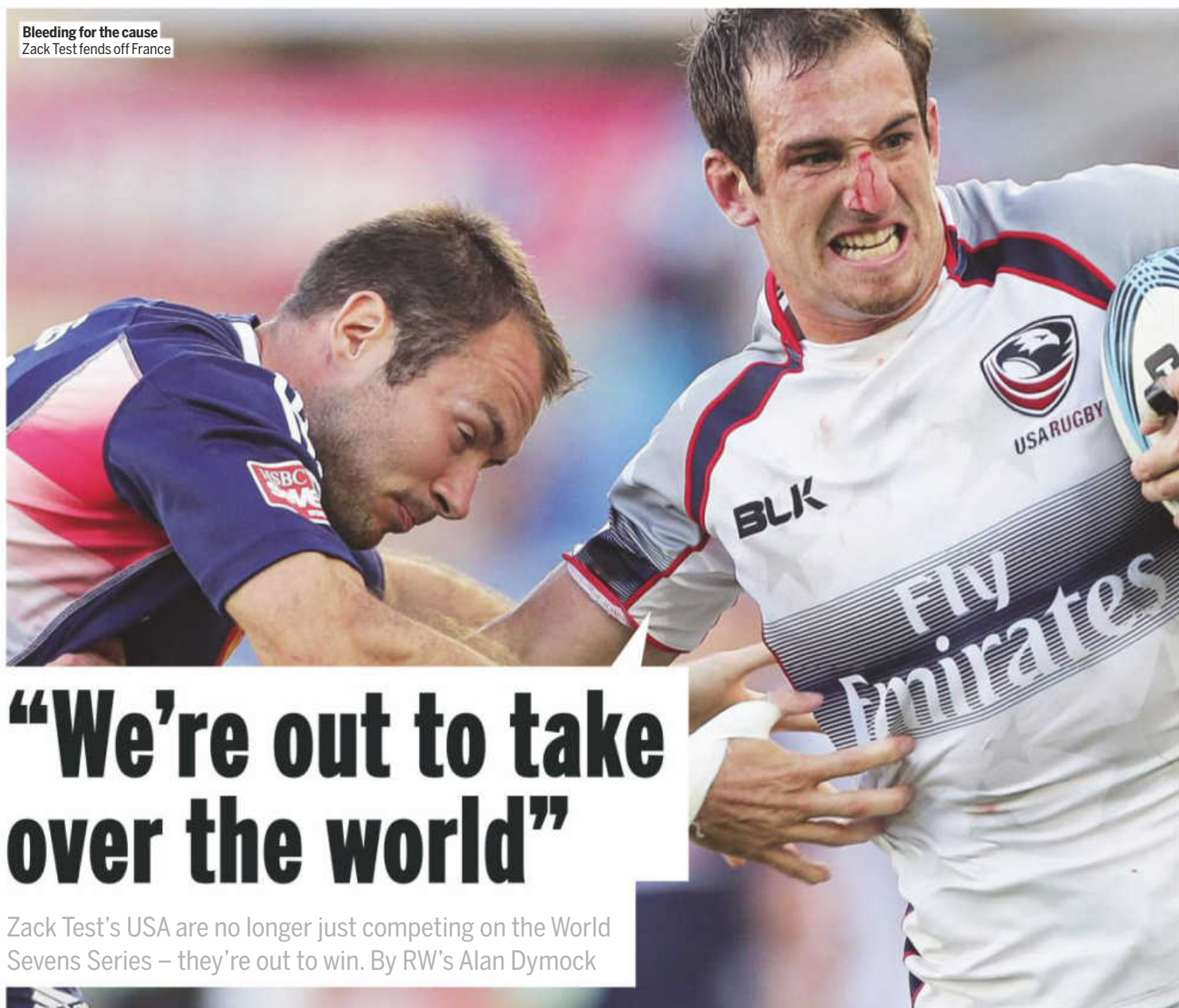
World Sevens schedule – two less than last season. World Rugby are hopeful of adding more legs but the news hasn't been welcomed by leading players, with Canada's Jen Kish calling it "disappointing".

**POTTER'S BAR** USA star Jillion Potter (left) returned to lead her country in the Sevens Series in Dubai just 14 months after being diagnosed with cancer. Having taken 18 weeks out for treatment, she is now targeting a place in the USA Olympics team.



## FOCUS ON SEVENS

**Bleeding for the cause**  
Zack Test fends off France



# “We’re out to take over the world”

Zack Test’s USA are no longer just competing on the World Sevens Series – they’re out to win. By RW’s Alan Dymock

**T**HAT’S IT. Time to wake up. If USA rugby is a slumbering giant then this is the season when the alarm starts ringing. At least that is according to US sevens stalwart Zack Test.

At the final event of last season’s HSBC World Sevens Series, the States left London with a first-ever tournament victory. They then qualified for the Olympics. This US side clicked right at the end of a hard season and they want to start much, much quicker this time.

“Any team has to go through pains to get gains, so we had that last year. We have to start fresh now,” Test says. “Every season has a different feel to it, and it’s especially true for this one with the Olympics at the end as a golden prize. It is going to be a long, daunting season, but we will go from tournament to tournament looking for the right results.

“That means no compromising. In training, no ‘what ifs?’ If you’re not going to get it in training, you’re not going to get it in a game, so it has to be high intensity, performing at the

highest level, and hopefully that will transfer through to the series.”

Test has been through the wringer with the sevens team. An eight-year veteran of the circuit, despite being only 26, he remembers the days when it was all about development, about learning the game. Now he is confident and he is hungry.

Even last season it was about competing, being one of the top eight sides on the circuit who could hang with the big boys. Now they want to be in the top four, competing to win every single series event. As the ever-experienced Test puts it: “I’m out to lead by example, to have my team go out and take over the world.”

These are exciting times for rugby in the States. According to Test, the game’s popularity has exploded. The

## “I SWAPPED JERSEYS WITH BRYAN HABANA”



### QUICK-FIRE PROFILE

**Name** Zack Test  
**Age** 26 (13 Oct 1989)  
**Birthplace** Redwood City, California  
**Sevens debut** Dubai 2008  
**Series titles** London 2015





## SEVENS GALLERY

Four teams who qualified for the Olympics in November

PICS: GETTY, REUTERS & SARU/GALLO IMAGES



**Jump and shout**  
Japan's men triumphed in the Asian competition



**Oceania ticket**  
Henry Hutchison scores as Australia book their place in Rio



**Out of Africa**  
Kenya won their qualifying event



**Island pride**  
Fiji Women will be in Brazil



**A bit of a blur**  
Japan in action

World Cup was great for the game, but the continued improvement of the sevens side has not gone unnoticed either. In 2016 there will be a professional North American league, while a US Olympic medal could further push rugby's cause.

Global stars can be made at the Games, but at the recent World Cup Test had to mark one potential Olympian who is already a big name when he played the Springboks.

"I swapped jerseys with Bryan Habana at the World Cup and had a nice little chat with him after. He was good. He wished me and the team well for the series and the Olympics and told me he's rooting for us. We might face him again in sevens, so it'd be nice to play him with a little more space on the field!" **rw**

**SEVENS  
SURVIVAL  
TIPS**

### THIS MONTH'S TIP: USE SUNSCREEN!

From Dubai and Sydney to London in May, the Sevens Series sees a lot of sun. When the party is going, you may not want to wear too much. You should get the lotion out though – you may regret it otherwise!







## FOCUS ON CLUB RUGBY

# NATIONAL 1&2

A round-up of news from the National Leagues. Edited by Michael Austin



PICT: MICHAEL AUSTIN

### CLUB FOCUS

## SALE

What an impact Sale have made since the club was reinvented almost 15 years ago at the instigation of former England captain and prop Fran Cotton. The club went out of existence in 1996-97 when what is now Sale Sharks were created. Seven league titles in 13 seasons have uplifted Sale from South Lancs-Cheshire Five to National Two North and now they're semi-professional.

Chairman of rugby Richard Trickey, 70, a former Sale, Lancashire, North-West and Barbarians lock, said: "The target this season is to maintain our status and develop players so they become more competitive. We want to develop our own mini-juniors but it will take five to ten years to get enough volunteers off the field."

Ex-England scrum-half Steve Smith, chairman for seven years, is a driving force, alongside DoR Brendan Thomas. Fly-half Liam McGovern leads the side that clinched the National Three North title by beating Sandal 31-22 at Heywood Road last spring. Trickey added: "Team spirit and togetherness got us there."

### GRAND ACHIEVEMENT

Lock Adrian 'Adey' Grey joined the four-figure elite when making his 1,000th appearance in Fylde colours for the club's Saracens side against Aldwinians. His career has so far spanned 35 seasons and high spots include touring Paris in 1986 and Hong Kong two years later, and Fylde Vandal's 2007 win over Latvia's national side.

Clubmate Andy Tomkinson has been forced into retirement after 37 years of propping. He sustained a spiral fracture to his right fibula when playing for the Vandal's against Orrell and said: "I can only count my blessings, having played with such outstanding characters and against terrific opposition."

### SPREADING THE WORD

**Plymouth Albion**, relegated to National One this season, are going into the community to maintain and extend relationships. They've contacted

all the Plymouth Combination clubs, offering coaching as well as the opportunity to play matches at their Brickfields headquarters.

Devonport HSOB, Old Technicians and Tamar Saracens have taken up the offer to tread Albion's turf and eight city clubs are benefiting from their coaching, plus others further afield such as St Austell, Wadebridge, Kingsbridge and Okehampton. Albion DoR Graham Dawe said: "It's about trying to make Plymouth rugby successful at all levels."

### TOUGH GOING

Kieron Dawson highlighted the inexperience which threatened to derail **Worthing Raiders'** promotion bid even before it had really got going. He said after a wasteful 25-11 defeat by Bury St Edmunds: "When you look at the bench, the oldest player was 19." Back-row Jamie Redmayne was among those ruled out by serious injury.

▲ **Fast forward** Liam McGovern steps out of a South Leicester tackle

### GOOD LOCK

**Luctonians**, of Two North, are welcoming the return of lock John Kelly from a stint travelling in New Zealand. Kelly's reappearance at Mortimer Park should be a timely boost for Lucs, who are already facing another relegation battle having lost seven of their first nine games. DoR Alex Davidson said: "We need to get league points on the board before Christmas because otherwise we'll be staring straight down the barrel."

### BAD BEHAVIOUR

Coach Scott Morgan has blamed poor discipline for **Coventry's** inconsistent National One run. They fell away at the end of last season and have struggled to build momentum this time, partly through 12 yellow cards in a seven-match spell.

He said: "We had eight in four weeks and that's impossible to cope with in this league. Our players aren't full-time; they're not as fit. We can't afford to have people off the pitch."

### IN MEMORY OF HURST

A veteran **Henley** Vultures team beat Old Mackays, a touring Chilean side of similar longevity, 52-10. The match honoured Andy Hurst, who died in 2011 aged 75. A solicitor and Henley resident, he won an England cap against Scotland in 1962 and was married in Chile seven years later – his family still lives there. The oldest players were Henley's Tom Coleman, 73, and Rafael Oyanguen, 67, for the Chileans.

### BARTON BLOW

Flanker Hamish Barton, who had made the **Old Elthamians** No 7 shirt his own, sustained a season-ending injury in the seven-try, 49-11 victory over Launceston in Two South. He ruptured his anterior cruciate ligament in an apparently innocuous challenge and has had surgery. DoR Gavin Lach said: "I'm gutted for Hamish."

### ON YOUR BIKE

**Richmond** Veterans, alias the Heavies, plan to cycle to a first-team away match every season in aid of the Gareth Savin Trust. He suffered severe spinal injuries in 1992 when playing for Richmond U19. It was the idea of former lock Rob Sterry and first up was the ride to Cinderford.

The 150-mile route took in Windsor and Charlbury, where they were put up overnight by ex-lock Ali Law and his wife Lisa. Then they covered the final 55 miles on match day. It all ended well with Richmond winning 43-20.

### DRINK TO THAT!

'Ales in the Dales', alias the Grassington Beer Festival, had a terrific spin-off for rugby fans. The two-day event coincided with **Wharfedale**, based a mile away in Threshfield, playing at Rosslyn Park. So organisers showed the match live on the big screen at the festival that boasted 50 beers, ciders and lagers from 23 breweries.

### FALCONS FLYING

While **Huddersfield** battled to scramble clear from the bottom three in Two North, their second team, the Falcons, put together a 20-match winning sequence under Henry Ward. They train with the first team and were unbeaten last term. 🏉

## SHORT PASS

Damien Cook, 33, the Redruth lock and captain, has been forced to retire through persistent injury problems after 12 seasons with the Two South club in which he played 250-plus games. The son of Cornwall legend Tony Cook, he helped Cornwall beat Lancashire 18-13 in the Bill Beaumont Cup final last season.





## FOCUS ON CLUB RUGBY

# MIDLANDS

A round-up of news from the Midlands region. Edited by Michael Austin

**OFFICIAL WARNING** Warwickshire have announced a zero tolerance policy to abuse of match officials by adding 50% to the length of sentences for such cases.

Kim Challis, the county union's disciplinary secretary, wrote in a letter to clubs: "Scrutiny of sending-off reports have revealed a trend where failure to deal promptly with instances of abuse of match officials results in severe problems later in the game which escalate."

**GO AHEAD** Stafford have got the green light to develop a new ground at Blackberry Lane, a short distance from their Castlefields base. Despite more than 100 objections, the Two West (North) club received over 200 letters of support for the project that was approved by Stafford Borough Council.

**FITS TO A TEE** Redditch have given local youngsters the chance to design a playing shirt for their first team next season as part

of the club's 50th anniversary. Spokesman Craig Martin said: "Long-standing member Lee Williams gave me the idea of getting the community and the schools involved. It was to build awareness in rugby around Redditch and generate interest in the junior sections."

Winners will receive a framed copy of their design, as well as a shirt, and an invitation to the anniversary game.

**DOUBLE ACT** Sam Vesty and Emily Scarratt, England products from **Leicester Forest**, of Two East (South), officially opened their new clubhouse extension. The facility, costing £100,000, was made possible by 18 months of fund-raising, including grant applications.

With two en-suite changing rooms, Forest can now establish a girls' section while a president's viewing lounge has been added. The majority of work and materials were provided by club members and the build was finished with a £50,000 Sport England grant.

## SHORT PASS

The launch of the Peterborough U11 girls' team was a landmark for the Two East (South) club and on their debut they beat Qundle Owlettes. Coach Simon Potter said: "An increasing number of clubs are launching teams for girls."

Forest are also prepared if someone suffers a cardiac arrest. A total of 14 coaches and players took part in Joe's Mini Heartstart for Sports Clubs AED training. Their defibrillator is being sited outside the clubhouse.

**BILLY THE KID** The emergence of talented home-grown players, including centre Billy Wara, has softened the injury problems for **Stoke-on-Trent**. Wara, 17, marked his senior debut with a try in the 45-10 One West defeat by Worcester Wanderers, a performance which encouraged captain Chris Rowley. He said: "The great thing is that we've got a lot of really good players coming through. But we don't want to throw everyone in at once."

**OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS** Joe Nixon, 20, a **Longton** prop, has been given the chance to train with Canterbury Crusaders. Nixon spent a spell playing for New Brighton in Christchurch while travelling in New Zealand earlier this year and impressed the Crusaders, who have invited him to be involved in their player performance programme in March. If Nixon, who's been deaf for four years, accepts the offer, he will have to defer his sports science degree at Loughborough University.

**CHARITY FEASTS** Kidderminster **Carolians'** coffee morning raised more than £1,200 for Macmillan Cancer Support. The event was organised by first-team manager Laura Skirving and was well attended by club members and the local community.

Award-winning chef Muhammad Karim was in unfamiliar territory at **Sleaford**, where he cooked some of his famous dishes during a curry night in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

**TIME'S UP** Tom Pykett, 57, has hung up his boots after more than 40 years with **Newark**, of One East. He rose from the fourth team to the firsts and has been third XV manager for the past 20 years. He said: "I'll miss the camaraderie and banter. It's time to take a back seat but I won't go away completely."

**SWAIN GAIN** Bromyard No 10 Matt Swain amassed a club league record of 39 points in the 79-0 Four West (North) win over Aldridge. Swain ran in a hat-trick before half-time and added the rest of his points with the boot.

Joe Mills, the **Banbury** centre, crossed Bedworth's line five times in a 73-26 victory in Two West (South). **Burntwood** also turned in a proud performance when they beat Cannock 22-14 in Three West (North), the first league meeting between the neighbours.

**SAD LOSSES** Coventry-based **Stoke Old Boys** are mourning Malcolm Williams, 69. He was a stalwart of the former Cheylesmore Old Boys club and then became a first-team regular at Stoke OB, who regarded him as one of the best wings in local junior rugby.

**Droitwich** were saddened by the death of former fly-half Simon Mountjoy. A former Worcester RGS pupil, he worked as an estate agent and was a popular club member.



PIC: MICHAEL AUSTIN

## CLUB FOCUS

### MARKET RASEN

After finishing seventh in One East in the past two seasons, Market Rasen are rebuilding as retirements and departures have prompted a revamped back-line. When they were left without a recognised goalkicker, the unusual answer was in the front row with hooker Tom Alldridge stepping up. Steve Everton, in his 25th year as treasurer, said: "Tom's achieved a fair degree of success."

Everton has just reached the 40th anniversary of his first-team debut. He went on to play 600 games for Rasen's four senior sides and had ten years coaching their juniors as well as refereeing them. 'Everton' still appears on the team sheet with his sons Chris and Peter as first-team half-backs. Wife Carole is the main preparer of the buffet for the opposition that precedes each first XV game.

Flanker Chris Starling captains the club and Rhuari Pike is head coach. Rasen run three senior sides with juniors from U6 to U18. Their big achievement is sustaining their league level despite difficulties in player retention from the junior section.

**Break man**  
Chris Everton probes a gap at Newark



## FOCUS ON CLUB RUGBY

# LONDON & SE

A round-up of news from London and the South-East. Edited by Michael Austin

**GOLDEN OLDIE** As comebacks go, Tony Barrington-Doe can claim one of the most amazing. The **Warringham** front-rower was among the oldest players in the first team when he 'retired' 11 years ago but, at 58, he made a surprise 15-minute return in the 33-10 win at Basingstoke in Two South-West.

As team manager, he plays one or two social games a season and said: "It's unusual at this level for a player of my age to turn out. I think normally our oldest one would be in his mid-30s. Club captain Andrew Cox told the man on the Tannoy my age so when I came on they announced that. Everyone just started clapping so I got a standing ovation!"

**SHORT STREET** Gary Street, who guided England Women to RWC glory in 2014, left his role as DoR at Two North-East club **Basildon** after only three weeks. He said: "I'm working in Oxford now and it took me three hours to get to training. It's a real shame but it was becoming unworkable." They lost all three games during his tenure before ex-Basildon player Kevin Blackmore took over as coach.

**LARS BAR** **Heathfield & Waldron** toasted their first senior international when back-row prospect Lars Thorkildsen was sent on as a replacement by Norway against Bulgaria in the European Nations Cup. Still seven weeks short of his 18th birthday, he became the fourth-youngest Test replacement ever.

The Sussex-born No 8 joined Heathfield from Hastings & Bexhill when he was 11 and has played through the age groups. His dad Per, also a member at Heathfield after moving to England from Norway 23 years ago, is the president of Norwegian rugby.

**FAST LEARNERS** Coach Ben Dudley was delighted how quickly his **Portsmouth** side grasped what he wanted at the breakdown after taking over in the summer. "At our level we only have limited time together to work on things," he said. "We need to learn quickly."

After defeating previously unbeaten Chobham 22-20, **Havant** hoped to play like that every week in One South. Coach Will Knight said: "The whole team raised the bar in terms of performance. If we maintain it, then we will be incredibly difficult to beat."

**YOUTH CLUB** Eastern Counties One club **Woodbridge** attracted 1,000-plus players and spectators to their seventh annual youth development festival spanning the U7 to U12 age groups. Sponsored by Woodbridge School, the tournament attracted 12 clubs with winners being Bury St Edmunds, Woodbridge Green, Stowmarket, Southwold, Sudbury and North Walsham. The hosts have 330 junior members – the most in the area.

**PARKER'S RIDE** **East Grinstead** coach Justin Bishop has brought in Tom Parker and reckons the scrum-half is too good for National Three London. Bishop said: "Tommy is a couple of leagues above this division. He can spark something from nothing."

**Maidstone**, of One South, have recruited Alfie Paea, a powerful midfield back, from Sydney-based Randwick, young Aussie prop Andi Petelo and back-row Jake Eaglesham.

**COLF SYRUP** **Horsham** are ticking off the landmarks on their return to Two South-East. As well as a first win in many years at Hove, the 29-13 victory over Old Colfeians was key. Coach Nick Stocker said: "Colfeians are an experienced mid-table side, so a positive result was crucial to show we belong here."

**ONE TO WATCH** **Hampstead's** new wing Olufemi Ajayi has been backed by coach Peter Breen to score 30 tries in Two North-West after running in a hat-trick in the 46-7 win over Staines. Ajayi, 6ft 3in and 17st 7lb, works at the Royal Free Hospital and has played for Leicester Lions in National Two North. Breen said: "With one try, he caught the kick-off and went 50 metres, knocking over six tacklers."

## SHORT PASS

A 93-0 defeat by an experienced Beckenham side didn't detract from Streatham-Croydon fielding a first women's team, coached by Georgie Cooke. The Salamanders' squad of 17 included 15 girls playing their first game of rugby.

**HISTORY MADE** One South club **Sutton & Epsom**, who have 1,200 members aged four to 18, did the double at the Epsom & Ewell Awards. They became Sports Club of the Year and their U13 side were named Young Sports Team of 2015 after winning the Surrey Cup.

**Sandown & Shanklin**, of Hampshire One, switched a match during the RWC to a Friday night. The Isle of Wight game was their first floodlit league fixture and they won 12-6.

**A SIN WIN** **Bognor's** fine run in Hampshire One scaled new heights when they scored a try when down to 12 men. They were hanging on to a clean sheet, with three players in the sin-bin, when a tackle knocked the ball loose and Pat Gibbs picked up and kicked through to score in the 62-0 win over Petersfield.

Even when losing 49-12 to London Cornish in Two South-West, coach Andy Fields was impressed by **Winchester's** young side. "This team showed great heart," he said. 🐾



PHOTO: MARVIN BAKER

## CLUB FOCUS

# SHOREHAM

There are major advances on all fronts for Shoreham. Last season was the best in the club's history when they won the Sussex Plate, their first trophy, and narrowly missed promotion from the Sussex Intermediate League. This time, they're on track to climb to Sussex One with five straight wins, want to build their player base and field two teams every week. They've launched a girls' side, started a walking rugby team and their mini-junior section has 200 members for the first time.

Chairman Mark Norris said: "We're probably the only club in the county without a clubhouse. We started just over 20 years ago as a senior team having a game, but that has developed into a thriving set-up. We obtained planning permission in September to build the clubhouse and are now trying to secure funds."

Flanker Daegan Beaumont leads the side while Nick Hook and Chris Reynold coach the senior teams. Shoreham also have a claim to fame – Richard Hadfield, a singer who won *Britain's Got Talent* in 2014 with the group Collabro, is in the squad.

▲ **Front footing** Gav Cox strides through Newick's defence





## FOCUS ON CLUB RUGBY

# SOUTH-WEST

A round-up of news from the South-West region. Edited by Michael Austin

**GREEN LIGHT** Planning permission has taken Bristol-based **Dings Crusaders**, of National Three South-West, a step nearer to leaving their ageing Lockleaze headquarters.

South Gloucestershire District Council have approved an application for a new rugby and community centre on 26 acres of land opposite Frenchay Hospital. It's subject to a legal agreement relating to confirmation of planning obligations and clearance by central government as the new site is within the green belt. The relocation will be funded by the sale of Dings' existing ground for housing.

**LAWTON IN ORDER** Maidenhead are piling up the wins in Southern Counties North under the guidance of DoR Tony Brooks, head coach Russell Bolton and captain Myke Parrott. It's the perfect way to honour former player and past president Keith Lawton, who's celebrating his 50th year with the club.

Lawton said at a surprise lunch attended by 100 guests: "I was bowled over by the number who came! One highlight for me over the years was when we moved into Braywick and I'm very proud of the impressive facility that we have." It was also the backdrop to the recent Samsung School of Rugby TV adverts.

The club's playing strength has expanded with the addition of the Maidenhead Hawks, their successful touch squad. Rob Andrew presented the RFU's Gold Legacy Award to head of touch rugby Sammi Phillips.

**GOLDEN SEASON** It's celebration time for Cornwall One club **Helston**, who are wearing one-off shirts this season to mark their 50th anniversary. No 9 and captain LJ Collick said: "This is a good club with good people. I'm proud to have been part of it for 20 years."

"We hosted a dinner for those who've been associated with the club since 1965 and it was fantastic to see so many people. Players from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s told great stories." With a thriving junior section and a successful colts team, the future's bright.

**AT LAST!** Cullompton ended a ten-month wait for a league win when beating Crediton 46-18 in Western Counties West. Cully were relegated from One West last spring.

The spirit of rugby shone through when **Drybrook** Extras loaned three players to short-handed Hardwicke & Quedgeley Harlequins and still won 57-31.

**DRUM BEAT** The **Falmouth Marine Band**, a Cornish institution with strong links to Duchy rugby, bade farewell to popular drum major Paul Wickes after 20 years. He retired after Cornish Pirates' match against Bristol, having been band leader for 13 years, during which he threw the leader's mace over the posts and didn't drop it once.

He received an MBE in early December for services to the Marine Industry and the community of Falmouth. Former Cornwall coach Benji Thomas described the band as the 16th player at the 1991 Twickenham final in which Yorkshire were beaten 29-20.



PICT: MICHAEL AUSTIN

### CLUB FOCUS

## HUCCLECOTE

Relying on their own resources and ingenuity is a source of pride for Hucclecote, whose founder members built the clubhouse for the legions of youngsters who have followed. They began as Hucclecote Old Boys in 1971, currently run two senior sides, juniors up to the age of 15 and a women's XV. Fixture secretary Steve Hanslow, whose son Patrick, a flanker, leads the first team, said: "The nucleus came through the juniors and the second team comprises players from the past."

They include brothers Richard Zeal, a prop, and hooker Cliff, who with 98 years between them stepped up for the Gloucestershire Premier match against Bristol Saracens when the club had front-row problems. Ex-Wales B wing Andy Phillips heads a coaching team also featuring centre James Price and prop Andy Wilson.

After a mid-table finish last season, Hucclecote are aiming to break into the top half this time. And a famous name is proudly etched on their honours board – Wales and Lions wing Alex Cuthbert, who played for their junior sides.

### ▲ Heave ho!

Andy Wilson (left) and Darren Collier lend a hand against Berry Hill

**BLOOD WORK** Southern Counties North club **Drifters** are responding to their local Buckinghamshire area's need for 100,000 more blood donors. They have set up the 'Drifters Blood Donation Drive' that kicked off on a training night with a contribution of 40 pints of blood from players and members.

Club captain Alex Coombes said: "Wexham Park Hospital has seen enough Drifters players over the years and the boys wanted to give something back! From now on we will be organising a donation twice a year."

**NEW BUILD** While **Thatcham** struggled to make an impact on the Southern Counties North table, there's excitement at their Henwick Fields base where work has started on their new clubhouse. It follows the signing of a lease for the land until 2050 and the green light from the RFU. Clubman Damian

Hudson said: "Now the hard work really starts!" With a build time of 26 weeks, they hope to have it completed by March 2016.

The club suffered a blow when captain and No 8 Mark Smith sustained a broken leg in the opening match against Bicester, prop Matt Langdon succeeding him. Their second team have won promotion for the past two seasons and are now in the league below.

**ENERGY DRIVE** Despite losing their first match 18-7 to Wallingford, **Aylesbury** were one of the front-runners in Southern Counties North with five straight wins. Confidence is high with Dave Larham as head coach, Gareth Collings the forwards mentor and ex-Wasps Academy manager Rob Smith in charge of the backs. Larham said: "We're trying to reduce the side's average age with players who bring energy and reinvigorate everyone."

## SHORT PASS

Premiership referee Luke Pearce fronted a recruitment evening at Barnstaple aimed at attracting at least ten new officials for the Devon Society to replace members who retire or move. Pearce began refereeing in 2007, rose through the ranks and was given an RFU contract three years later.



## FOCUS ON CLUB RUGBY

# NORTH

A round-up of news from the North region. Edited by Michael Austin

**TITLE DEEDS** There's a new name on the North-East circuit with South Tyneside College being rebranded as **South Shields**. Club manager Daniel McKay said: "We want to appeal to a wider audience and hopefully this will help us to climb the pyramid. We are in our fourth year as a group under DoR Tom Brooks and assistant coach Stuart Robson."

The club, based within South Tyneside College, were formed in 1956 and have a new sponsor in Hedworth Hall. A third team is on the verge of being launched at the club, who won just three of 26 games last term and were relegated from Durham-Northumberland Two. In sharp contrast, they were beaten only once in their first seven D-N Three games and last month beat Prudhoe & Stocksfield 51-5.

**SECONDS CHANCE** **Ashton-on-Mersey** have withdrawn their first team from Cheshire (South), with the side adopting the second XV's fixtures in Raging Bull Division

Four East. Chairman Pat Stokes said: "The playing and executive committee believe it's in the best interests of the club. A chronic shortage of senior players made it difficult to be competitive in Cheshire (South)."

**BRUCE'S BONUS** **Wibsey** ended Hornsea's 100% record by 32-20 in Yorkshire Five and team manager Steve Brooke said: "It's the best performance in the five years that I've been doing the job. The result is a testament to the work that Andy Rose, Jamie Vogel and Rob Greenwood are doing with us." Wibsey sealed victory with a late try by wing and Man of the Match Bruce Mpfu.

**ON THE UP** **St Benedict's**, who won the Cumbria Cup last season by beating higher-ranked Penrith, have become the county's Team of the Year. Whitehaven-based, they topped the North Lancs-Cumbria table in November with eight wins from nine games.

## SHORT PASS

Former Liverpool Collegiate player Paddy Breen stepped into the club's senior coaching role that had been vacant for the season's first two months. Collegiate run four sides, with the first XV in South Lancs-Cheshire One.

**PROUD DAD** Nigel Heslop, a 1991 Grand Slam winner with England, had a match to savour – as a spectator. He saw his son and fellow wing Danny, 17, score two tries on his first senior start for **Liverpool St Helens** in the 29-3 South Lancs-Cheshire One win over Sefton. Centre Dave Sutton also got a brace.

**FRESH START** **Warrington's** best start to a league season brought eight straight wins in One West before they were beaten 27-12 by Kendal. Coach Andy Roberts said: "We're running almost the same squad as last season, but there is a new sharpness and a more enthusiastic atmosphere. Most of the lads have come up through the mini-juniors." The club recently organised a Ruck 'n' Roll rugby, music and beer festival that attracted more than 500 people. Their U12 team won the Land Rover tournament in Manchester, too, which earns them a trip to Twickenham to take part in the 'Parade of Champions' at half-time in the 2016 Aviva Premiership final.

**CASH BOOST** **Altrincham Kersal**, also of One West, have acquired floodlights after being chosen by the RFU as a Lead Up and Legacy Centre, which brought a £27,000 grant. They were switched on by the Mayor of Trafford, John Holden, who said: "The club have a group of hard-working volunteers and this funding will enable them to do even more for young people in the community."

**FAB FOUR** **Ponteland** players Ben Wallace, Kieron O'Sullivan, Sam Long and Dan Elsander became Guinness World Record holders in conjunction with Northern Print – creating the longest-ever linocut print and beating the existing record of 24 metres for pushing a scrum machine up a city street. To produce the print, the 'Ponteland four' were part of a group that heaved the scrum machine over the original linocut to produce a 33m-long print comprising sections created by print studios and art organisations from all 11 RWC host cities. In doing that, they shoved the machine 35 metres up Grey Street in Newcastle. The print will be housed in the World Rugby Museum at Twickenham.

**CALLAN HONOUR** 'An evening with three Cumbrian heroes' paid tribute to **Moresby's** former chairman Tommy Callan, 55, who died from cancer last May. He spent more than 40 years with the club and represented Cumbria. Club coach Roly Rowell described him as the "heart and soul of Moresby" and they have vowed never to let his memory be forgotten. The speakers at the evening were rugby league legends Gary Charlton, Aaron Lester and Hitro Okesene, and proceeds went to Hospice at Home in West Cumbria.

**WANTED: NAMES** There's an appeal from Liverpool-based **Sefton**. They are trying to form a profile of two post-war captains, JP Williams (1948-51) and JN Griffiths (1951-53), and need their Christian names. Contact David Bohl via the club's website with info. [info](#)



PIC: MICHAEL AUSTIN

## CLUB FOCUS

# NORTHALLERTON

Yorkshire Three club Northallerton have come a long way since days of yore when they hired a farmer's field in nearby Yafforth for the princely annual rental of two bottles of whisky. Founded in 1882, their present ground at Brompton Lodge was opened in 1974 and their latest ventures were upgrading the floodlights and refurbishing the clubhouse. Secretary Percy Barraclough, an ex-prop and referee, said: "The result is a modern, inviting space for players and their families."

They've also launched a junior section with five senior players past or present – James Hopkin, Doug Mulholland, Patrick Hebblethwaite, Phillip Swall and Jack Radcliffe – taking Level Two coaching qualifications to assist Alexander Porter.

Lock/No 8 Lee Peake leads the first team and Barraclough rates last season's achievement of reaching the RFU Junior Vase final as the club's pinnacle so far. Beaten 23-7 by Battersea Ironsides at Twickenham, they lost to Wetherby in the Yorkshire Silver Trophy final the following week, but kept their pride intact.

▲ **Going up**  
John Murphy  
outjumps Wetherby



| THE RUGBY WORLD |

# SCRUM



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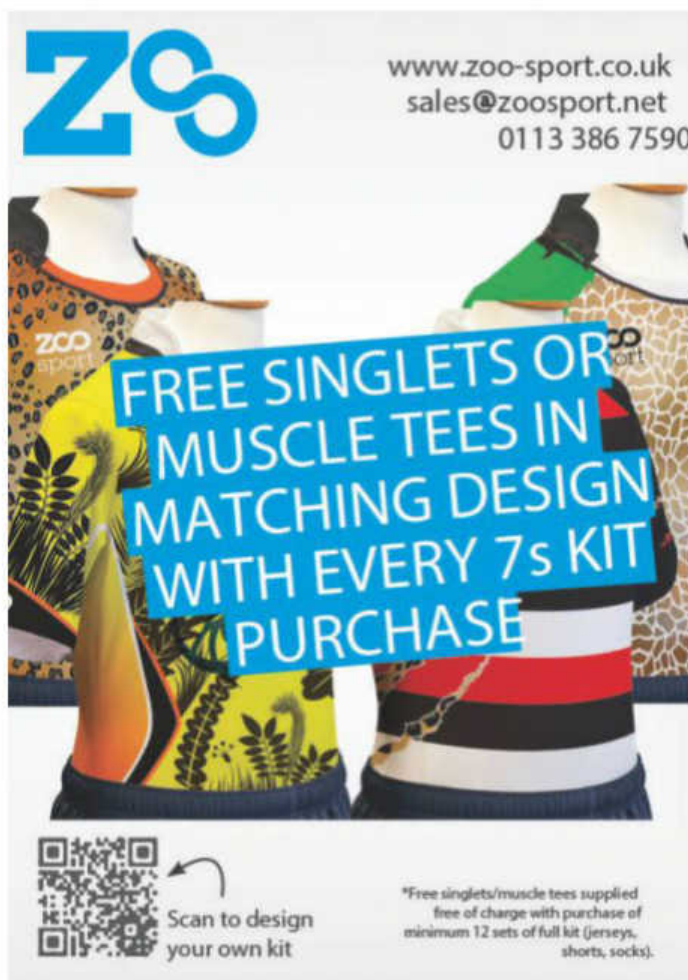
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# HOW TO FUEL BUSY WEEKS

**S**OMETIMES GAMES just pile up. One postponement and a tough fixture can have a midweek game hot on its tail. It's tough mentally to go back-to-back and it's hard to eat correctly for that.

According to rugby nutritionist James Morehen, from Liverpool John Moores University, there is a right way to do it, though.

First, you must recover. Imagine you had a tough away game. You have a

window of around 36 hours to repair, but getting in shakes or smoothies soon after the match helps.

The key is to get quality sources of carbs and proteins pumping through your system, with a carbs:protein ratio of 3:1 the best. It is fundamental

to get enough protein in to suit your body weight within hours – between 20-35g for rugby players – from a source like organic salmon,

and on the bus back a snack like raspberries and blueberries with yoghurt helps you tick along.



## DO


► Shy away from saturated fats  
► If you must 'cheat', fish and chips is the best takeaway. Have a big serving of fish, but watch the chips and monitor your carbohydrates intake

## DON'T

► Skimp on protein before these heavy performance periods

Then there's pre-bed snacking. When you sleep, you still need to repair. A glass of milk is casein rich, meaning it has slow-release protein. Need to chew something? Cottage cheese with Ryvita and olives can also do the trick at night. Now you're recovering, you can load up for the next game.

Sometimes you'll yearn for comfort foods. Morehen knows you may want the ease of a shop-bought pizza. Fine, but add extra protein – the average pizza has only around 10g of protein per slice – and keep the crusts thin!

Or just keep it simple and rustle up something like this stir-fry, below. 

## WHEN YOU SLEEP, YOU STILL NEED TO REPAIR

### SIMPLEST STIR-FRY

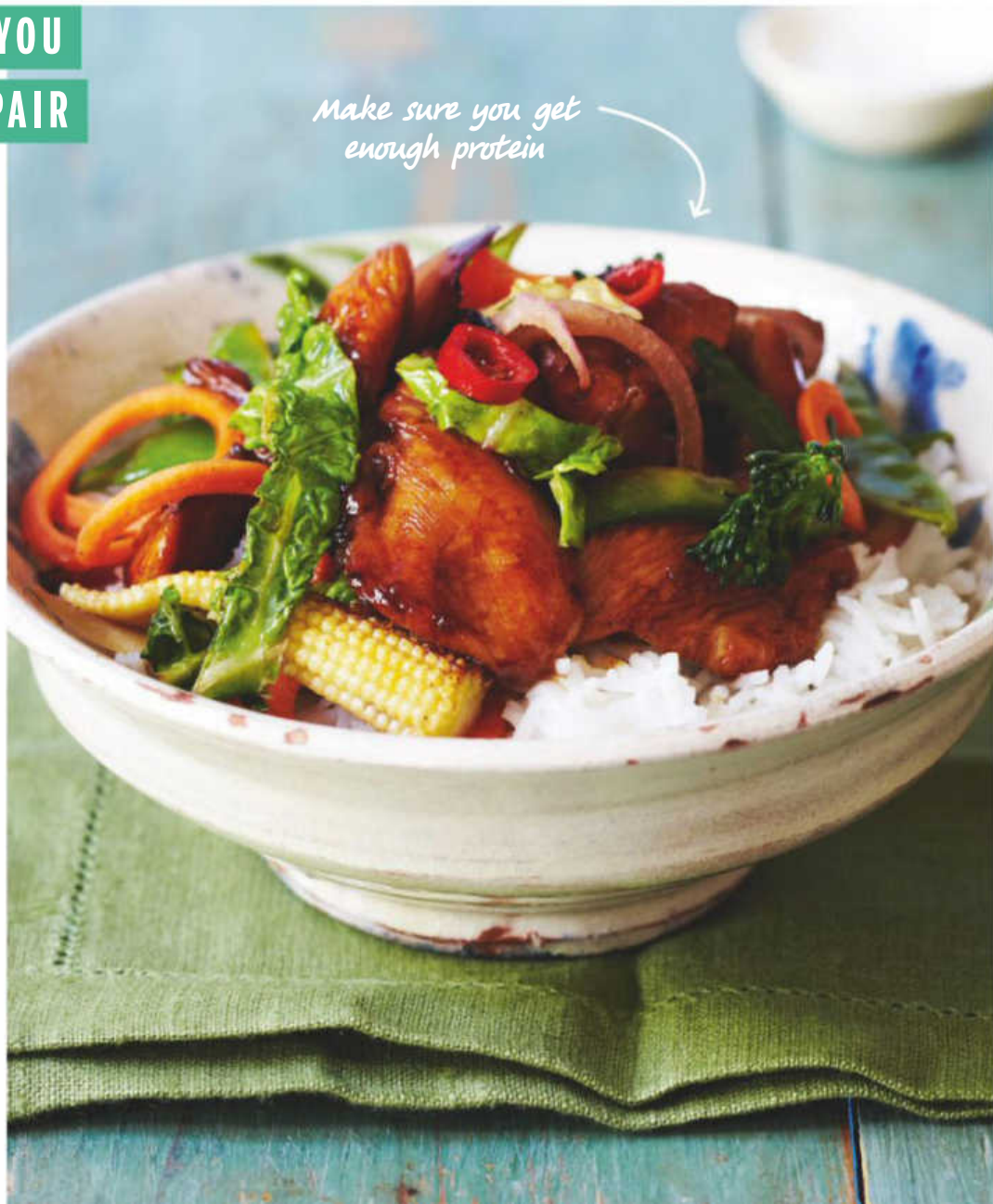
SERVES TWO

- 2½ tablespoons of coconut oil
- 3 chicken breasts, diced
- 2 large peppers, thinly sliced
- 190g baby sweetcorn
- 190g baby green beans
- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- Soy or sweet chilli sauce (optional)
- 1 tin of lentils
- 1 handful of rocket
- 1 handful of spinach
- Chilli (optional)
- Rice, noodles or couscous (optional)

► Image from...  
Charlotte Tolhurst

- 1 Pre-heat a wok or pan, with coconut oil. Add the diced chicken and cook.
- 2 Once coloured, add the vegetables and fry ingredients together, using optional extra sauces like soy or sweet chilli for flavour.
- 3 Add in your pre-cooked lentils, cook until coated.
- 4 Once all the ingredients are heated through, lay out on a bed of rocket and spinach and serve. Enjoy!

*Make sure you get enough protein*



# HOW TO MASTER WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

Player-coach Steve Brown, a former GB captain, explains what the sport demands of its top athletes

## Still the boss

Brown directs operations at a Wooden Spoon event

Captain of the GB wheelchair rugby team at London 2012, Steve Brown plays for Division One club London and coaches Division Two Canterbury. See him talk about the sport at [wswearerugby.org.uk](http://wswearerugby.org.uk)





## 1 CONTROL THE BALL

"Wheelchair rugby players need to adapt, improvise and overcome – they must handle the ball at high speeds and in tight situations that able-bodied athletes would struggle with. In training I try to wear them out – fatigue the top two inches – with passing or pick-up drills."



## 2 STAY VOCAL

"Communication is paramount in any sporting environment and in wheelchair rugby time is against you. The ball-carrier needs to know where everyone else is, so talk! Let team-mates know where you are because 75% of the work is off the ball."



## 3 WORKING THE CLOCK

"You're under a lot of pressure in wheelchair rugby because you have 40 seconds to score and must bounce or pass the ball every ten seconds. We do last-play routines in training where you have, say, ten or 12 seconds to score to 'win the match'."



## 4 IF IT WORKS, TRAIN IT

"Able-bodied athletes train head to toe, most wheelchair players train chest up. The sport has a huge array of disabilities. We do chest presses, pull-ups, triceps and biceps work, upper back, lats. You're expected to be as fit and strong as possible. If it works, train it."



## 5 KNOW YOUR TEAM-MATES

"Some players can pass the length of the court, others only six feet. You need an acute sense of team-mates' disabilities and abilities: Can they lift their arms overhead? Are they left-handed? You can't put a lead pass to a 0.5 player as you can with a 3.5."



## 6 MULTI-TASKING

"We have not only a ball and opposition but also a chair to worry about. It's like playing football and driving a car at the same time! Players work with obstacles in small areas to improve their chair control, and I vary the clock time to put them under pressure."

# WHAT YOU COULD DO



**STEVE BROWN**  
EX-GB CAPTAIN

● Wheelchair rugby relies on volunteers: team managers, coaches, physios, mechanics. Physiotherapy students, for

example, could join their local club and gain knowledge in a new environment.

● The sport is growing rapidly; in 2012 we had eight teams from seven clubs, it's now 22 teams from 18 clubs, plus six new youth clubs.

- The Wooden Spoon charity is funding several projects and highlighting the sport through ambassadors such as Maggie Alphonsi (right).
- GBWR launches the first coaching qualification next year, along with a campaign to become an official.
- For your nearest club or other info, see [gbwr.org.uk](http://gbwr.org.uk)



# HOW TO KICK AS FAR AS SCOTLAND'S STUART HOGG

## THE EXERCISES 3 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Follow these three simple moves and you too could be hoofing the ball a long way down the park...

### SINGLE LEG HOPS

▼ 4 x 6 REPS EACH LEG

Standing on one leg, jump onto the other leg, sinking weight into hips instead of knee when landing.

1



### LUNGE JUMPS

▼ 3 x 6 REPS

Go into a traditional lunge, then explosively push up so that you change legs and drop into a lunge on your other leg.

2



### HANGING LEG RAISES

▼ 3 x 10 REPS

Hang, with an overhand grip from a pull-up bar. Raise your legs from the hip, while you pull the ribcage down. Keep tension on the bar.

3



W

HEN THE pressure is bearing down on your side, as you scramble to secure ball in your own 22, nothing feels as liberating as seeing your clearing kicker get the ball to the sanctuary of the halfway line.

It's not an easy thing to do either. Ignoring the mental fortitude required to clear well under duress,

there is also the marriage of good technique and the power necessary to knock a kick for miles, just like the Hawick howitzer Stuart Hogg.

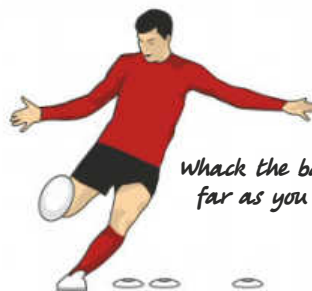
*Rugby World* can help you with building your kicking power. So to the left, Mat Grove, from Performance Pro gym in London, outlines three exercises to help you blast the ball for distance. We also have a challenge so you can track your progress below.

▲ **Scots away**  
Stuart Hogg clears in the RWC

## THE RUGBY WORLD FITNESS CHALLENGE

**Best of three kicks** Let's get the measuring tape out – it's time to see how far you can nudge the ball! So, standing on the try-line, with a friend or team-mate ready to mark where the ball lands with a cone, kick for distance. Do this three times in total and take your best length.

Forget whether your kicking is at **beginner** or **elite level** – you should work on this challenge over time and the exercises, left, should help.



### HOW FAR CAN YOU KICK?

Tell us! Contact us on Twitter @Rugbyworldmag or via Facebook – Rugby World Magazine

## WATCH MORE



▲ To watch a video of the exercises on the left being performed, go to [po.st/Hoggy](https://www.rugbyworld.com/post/Hoggy). And for more advice on drills, fitness and coaching, see [rugbyworld.com/takingpart](https://www.rugbyworld.com/takingpart)



CUT OUT. TAKE TO TRAINING. TAKE TO THE PARK. KEEP.

# Sam Vesty's LINEOUT TRY TIME

**Sam Vesty shows us how to create three different scoring options off a lineout in the opposition 22...**

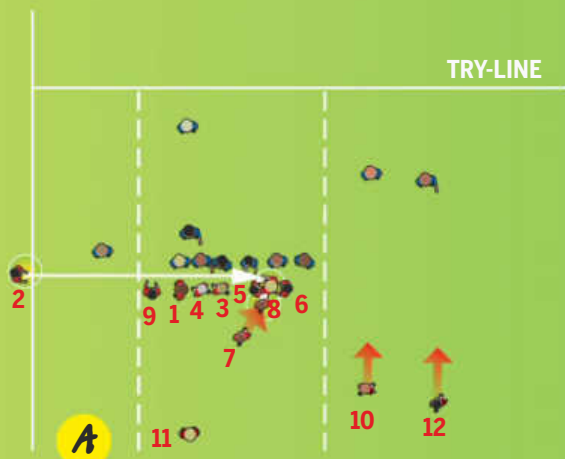
**What's the objective?** For the scrum-half to put 11 in for a try – or 10 or 12, depending on how the defence reacts to each player's different running lines.

**How it works** Trick the opposition into thinking you're going for a catch and drive, then 9 attacks the line, tracked by 11 on his inside, with 12 running a hard line on the outside.

**Key points** 9 needs to run on an arc, so that he straightens up on the defence. 9 and the runners must recognise and then exploit the best scoring opportunity.



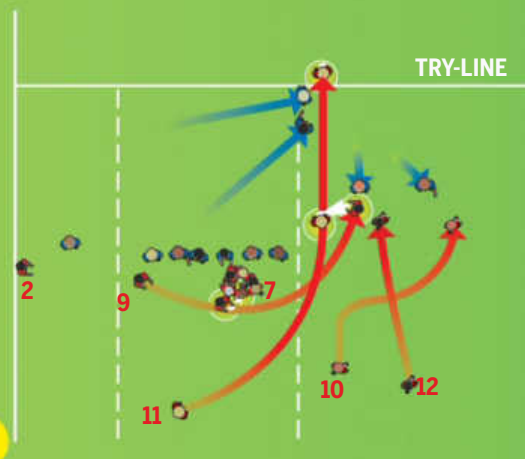
*Worcester backs coach Sam Vesty won three Premiership titles with Leicester. He also runs [prorugbycoach.com](http://prorugbycoach.com)*



**A**

STEP A

*9 stands at front, then 7 rolls ball to him as the forwards set up a fake maul*



**B**

STEP B

*From there 9 gives a scoring pass to 11 on his inside, 12 short, or 10 out the back*

**RUGBY WORLD**

PRO MOVES. ONLY IN RUGBY WORLD MAGAZINE

CUT OUT. TAKE TO TRAINING. TAKE TO THE PARK. KEEP.



*Ellis says...*

# "Play kick and catch"

## What's needed

One rugby ball.

## How to play

You can play this game on a rugby pitch, park or beach – pretty much anywhere with a bit of space.

One player punts the ball as high as they can and the

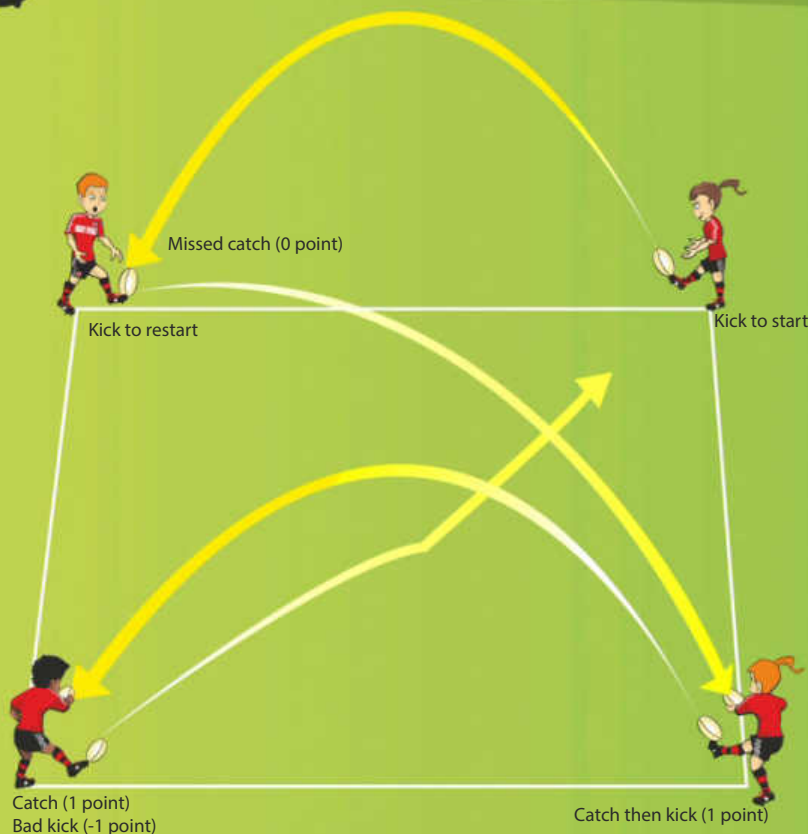
other tries to catch it. Catch it and you get a point, drop it and you get nothing. If the kick is too bad to catch, the kicker loses a point. The first player to ten points wins.

If you play in pairs, take turns to kick to one another. With three or more players, simply rotate, so that player

one kicks to player two, who kicks to player three etc.

## Tactics

Kickers should kick the ball as high as they dare, whilst retaining accuracy. Catchers should keep their eyes on the ball and let it land in their hands, not snatch at it.



RUGBY WORLD

MINI RUGBY GAMES. ONLY IN RUGBY WORLD MAGAZINE



# THIS MONTH'S SKILL

## HOW TO CLEAR OUT

**I**F AN opponent gets to a breakdown first, it's important to know how to clear out safely.

As the defender jackals, in an attempt to steal the ball, imagine the oblong shape created by his outstretched arms, the ball and

his chest as a window frame. The job of the tackled player's first support man is to target that window – and smash the glass!

With a strong, low body position, the support player should drive back the defender to prevent a turnover.

**Next month** Play one-on-one



### WATCH MORE

To watch a video of mini players demonstrating this drill, go to [po.st/ClearOut](http://po.st/ClearOut). For more skills videos, see [rugbyworld.com/takingpart](http://rugbyworld.com/takingpart)



**1 Window of opportunity** Target window created by the defender as he tries to steal the ball



**2 Go low** Adopt a strong, low body position to get your shoulder beneath your opponent's



**3 Smash & grab** Drive your arm through, grip his leg and use your shoulder to get beneath his chest



**4 Leg drive** Drive him up and back to clear threat, allowing your next player to anchor or play the ball







Green party  
Jared Payne has plenty  
of support v Canada

WORDS: MATT FIELD. PIC: GETTY IMAGES

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

# No Borders: Playing Rugby for Ireland

**A**WARD-WINNING Tom English, a contributor to *Rugby World*, interviewed 115 players who have represented Ireland between 1946 and the present day, to paint an insightful and entertaining picture of life inside the national squad.

Using the words of Ireland's star players, English shines a light on how the island's political and religious landscape impacted on the rugby team down the decades, with players' lives at times coming under threat.

This serious subject matter is balanced by plenty of humorous tales, quaint memories of how things used to be in the amateur days and



more gritty anecdotes from the modern era. English has interwoven his interviews with other published material, but has done this with such fluency that the reader gets the impression groups of players are sitting around a table in conversation.

There is plenty of controversy, including players' opinions about national coaches and revelations of splits and conflicts within the camp.

The only gripe is typographical sloppiness, with a few too many mistakes slipping past the proofreaders.

### 6 TO GIVE AWAY

For a chance to win a copy of this book, go to [rugbyworld.com/competitions](http://rugbyworld.com/competitions) and enter the relevant competition.

**RW Rating** ★★★★★  
Arena Sport, £19.99

### ▼ The Iron Curtain



There is plenty to marvel at in this tale of how Phil Larder became England's World Cup-winning defence coach. Writer Nick Bishop and Larder reveal the influence of Australian rugby league and American Football in a story that contains stacks of fascinating detail.

**RW Rating** ★★★★★  
Pitch Publishing, £18.99

### ▼ England Rugby Miscellany



This compact official England Rugby hardback will fit into a big coat pocket, so you can take it to the game. It features lots of stats, lists and trivia and will tell you, among other things, which English player reached 50 caps first and which has the most Lions caps.

**RW Rating** ★★★★★  
Carlton, £9.99

### ▼ Welsh Rugby in the 1970s



This "unashamedly nostalgic trawl through the greatest decade in rugby history" has the feel of a retro children's annual. Written by Carolyn Hitt, it reflects on big names and games, and doffs a cap to Max Boyce and Groggs along the way. Fun, but a bit pricey.

**RW Rating** ★★★★★  
Gomer, £14.99

## HEADGUARDS

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- ▼ **D. Optimum Tribal** Elastic drawcord at rear. £24.99, [optimumsport.com](http://optimumsport.com)

A



B



C



D







- ▲ **1. Purple Hat shirts** Under 5ft 8in? Try this clothes brand for the vertically challenged. These shirts are £85 from [purple-hat.co.uk](http://purple-hat.co.uk)
- ▲ **2. Fineside Purcell sweatshirt** This cotton sweatshirt, with striped details, is from Jonny Wilkinson's range. £55 from [fineside.com](http://fineside.com)
- ▲ **3. Bulletproof Coffee** A blend of coffee, unsalted butter and Octane Oil promises to give a natural kick – £9.95, [bulletproof.com](http://bulletproof.com)



- ▲ **4. Help for Heroes charity shirt** Support injured servicemen with this festive number. It's £39.99 at [lovell-rugby.co.uk](http://lovell-rugby.co.uk)
- ▲ **5. Adidas FF80 boots** Tailored for back-rows with extra traction – £69.99 from [rugbystore.co.uk](http://rugbystore.co.uk)
- ▲ **6. Canterbury Baselayer** Stand out in this baselayer, which will keep you toasty. It's priced £35.99 from [canterbury.com](http://canterbury.com)

# JOSH BEAUMONT

Age 23 (24 March 1992) Born Blackpool, Lancashire Country England Position No 8

**A**S A BALL-PLAYING No 8 and accomplished lineout operator, Sale's Josh Beaumont should be on the radar of new England coach Eddie Jones. Son of Grand Slam-winning captain Bill, he has taken a different route to most in the pro game, as he explains here...

**I first played rugby at seven at Fylde rugby club.** It was a two-minute walk away and it's where all my family have played their rugby. Then I moved on to schoolboy rugby at Arnold School in Blackpool, which doesn't exist now because it merged with our rivals.

**I'm the youngest of three brothers.** Sam, 30, is No 8 at Fylde while Danny, 33, stopped playing when he went to work in London as an accountant.

**I've only been a forward since I was 16 or 17.** I wasn't that big and played fly-half or centre. Growing up, I liked players such as Will Greenwood and Jonny Wilkinson, the 2000-2003 era.

**It helps to have played in a variety of positions.** I feel comfortable with ball in hand, especially in the wide channels. Not that I shirk going into rucks and doing the tight, nitty-gritty stuff – that's my first priority.

**I like the responsibility of making decisions on the pitch.** Michael Paterson called the lineouts last year but then got injured, so Nathan Hines suggested to Steve Diamond that I have a go. They helped me massively to be fair. Bryn Evans is doing it this year but I'm comfortable stepping in.

**Brian Ashton was a big influence on my career.** I played under him at Fylde and his way of thinking I'd never experienced before. He helped our attacking play, making us think on the pitch. To have world-class coaching like that at my age was so beneficial. Alex Kaye at Durham University was also very influential. He toughened me up and gave me the belief I was good enough to play professionally. I keep in contact with him a lot.

**The National Leagues contain some of the most skilful players I've come across.** They maybe didn't fancy the pro game or weren't big enough. In the Premiership there are lads I played with for England Students, like Alex

Lozowski, Richard Barrington and Simon Hammersley, or against, like Tomas Francis at Leeds University. It's rare for young forwards to get much game time in the Premiership so to do three years at university level is a great stepping stone to the pro game.

**Going to university made me a more rounded individual.**

I chose Durham because of its rugby reputation. I studied geography and my dissertation was 'The impact of mining on water quality in the Northern Lake District'. A thrilling title! It seems a long time ago now that I was stood in a river taking water samples and reading many a journal on water quality.

**I had no thoughts of being a pro player.** Halfway through my second year at Durham, I was offered a contract by Sale. I'd trained with Newcastle in pre-season and had to decide between them and Sale. I chose Sale because my roots were in the North-West and they were maybe showing a bit more ambition.

**I've played at Twickenham four times with Durham** – one Middlesex Sevens and three BUCS finals. The last final was my favourite day at the stadium as I was captain in our last game as a group and we beat UWIC. It was also my 21st birthday. The other time was for England in May against the Barbarians. My try that day is on YouTube because of an unbelievable bit of skill by Shane Geraghty, who flicked the ball between his legs to me. I saw



## JOSH'S ONE-WORD ANSWERS

Durham **Special**  
World Cup  
New Zealand  
Holiday **Spain**  
Steve Diamond  
Old school  
Twickenham **England**  
Room-mate  
Dave Seymour  
Training **No contact!**



◀ **A try at Twickers**  
Scoring against the Barbarians last May



**Josh the bosh**  
On the charge for Sale  
against Northampton



## “TO PLAY THREE YEARS AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL IS A GREAT STEPPING STONE TO THE PROFESSIONAL GAME”

the hooker coming and thought I'd try to get outside him. Fortunately I did.

**I'm one of the youngest Barbarians players ever.** I played for them in 2010 when I'd just turned 18. Brian Ashton was the coach and I played against Combined Services, at Aldershot, and then Richmond.

**Tiger Woods left me starstruck.** I was only ten or so and saw him in the clubhouse at the Open at Royal Lytham, when the press were round him. He was actually

stood next to me. I follow golf, cricket and football – I support Blackburn Rovers and watch them live when I can, which is about five times a year. My favourite sportsman is Cristiano Ronaldo (left) but if I could have a ticket to any sports event I'd go to Super Bowl – I'm a Patriots fan.

**Paul Deacon does a lot of skills work with us at Sale.** We want to feel comfortable with ball in hand, keep the ball in play and challenge defences. It's hard to break defences down but we know that as fatigue sets in,



### DID YOU KNOW?

Beaumont never deviates from his pre-match warm-up routine. “I do some short sprints, and then take three high balls,” he says. “But if I drop a high ball then I'll have to take another.”

and concentration goes, it will create opportunities for us.

**I've not really thought about playing for England.** Obviously it's your ambition as a professional to reach the top of the game, but right now it's about playing well for Sale and hopefully I'll get rewarded if I carry on putting in performances.

**I went to three games at the World Cup – England v Uruguay and both semi-finals.** You've got to watch what New Zealand are doing with Kieran Read, and Brodie Retallick as a second receiver in the line. The way they move the ball, they are so clinical. And they can up the intensity at any moment.

**Fish and chips is my weekly 'cheat' meal.** But I eat a lot of pasta dishes. Italian food is my favourite, and not just because I play rugby. 



# WHAT GOES ON TOUR

*Goes in Rugby World*

**W**E HAVE a couple of quieter nights – a few beers – in Queenstown during the 2011 World Cup, but there is one big blowout, writes former Ireland flanker Stephen Ferris. We head down to a bar called Ballarat and check out a live band.

Andrew Trimble is really good on the drums so we are hollering at him, to get him up there. Trimby is having none of it but we are not taking no for an answer. Eventually we get him up. He is playing away and the band are delighted; not sure what their original drummer thinks.

Myself, Jamie (Heaslip), Sean (O'Brien) and a few others are out and it is crazy. The barman turns round to me and says, "If you get your top off and get dancing, I'll get you all a free round of drinks."

Off comes the shirt, in two seconds flat. I'm dancing away like that, shirtless,

## IT'S CRAZY. I DANCE AWAY SHIRTLESS FOR AN HOUR

for about an hour before I stick it back on. Get all the lads the free drinks.

The bar has a really low ceiling so myself and Jamie, wherever we are crouching, are banging the roof to the beat of the music. Boom, boom, boom.

Next thing, one bang too many: Jamie's arm goes straight through the ceiling and plasterboard falls everywhere.

Jamie whips round to the barman. Nothing for a few seconds, then he shrugs his shoulders. 'F\*\*\* it,' he must decide. 'It's the World Cup.'

● *Extract from Man and Ball, published by Transworld Ireland, RRP £20.*



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# James is eager to be a leading figure

The Wales prop tells RW's Sarah Mockford what he brings to the Ospreys

**T**HROUGHOUT HIS three seasons at Bath, Paul James would pay attention to events across the Severn Bridge, particularly when it came to derby time. Now he's back at the Ospreys, the prop can experience the regional rivalry at first hand – and the prospect of two derbies in seven days awaits over the festive period.

The Ospreys make the short trip to Parc y Scarlets on Boxing Day, which could see him pack down against his Wales team-mate Samson Lee, before welcoming Newport Gwent Dragons to the Liberty Stadium on New Year's Day – and James sees these matches as extra Christmas presents.

"It's always nice to play in a derby," says the 33-year-old. "Even when I was in England I kept an eye on them because the derby games are what it's all about. The banter starts and you've got little personal battles – it's a good time of year."

James decided to cross the border in 2012 to test himself; to experience a new environment and a different competition having played for the Ospreys for nigh-on a decade in the Celtic League's various guises. He's always been a strong scrummager, but he feels he improved his all-round game during his time at the Rec.

"I'd been here so long, I just needed to freshen things up and get out of my comfort zone. The Premiership is a great league to play in and there are big, strong forward contests week in, week out. My set-piece improved quite a bit, plus my skill-set came on playing in that league, so coming back I feel I'm a better player."

The spell at Bath wasn't just beneficial in terms of physical developments either. James believes it's made him more vocal and brought out more leadership qualities in him – he was captain when Bath won in Toulouse last season – and that is one of the reasons the Ospreys were keen to bring him back to Wales.



## QUICK-FIRE PROFILE

**Name** Paul James  
**Age** 33 (13 May 1982)  
**Birthplace** Neath  
**Married?** Wife Louise, sons Dylan, nine, and Mason, six  
**Twitter** @Paul\_James1  
**Favourite TV programme** *Ray Donovan*. It's class  
**Fave film** *American Sniper*  
**Last book read** *The Guv'nor* – Lenny McLean's autobiography. It's good  
**Best holiday destination** Mexico or Jamaica  
**Dish you most like to cook** Chicken a la creme  
**Childhood rugby hero** Growing up, Brian Williams and Kevin Phillips at Neath  
**Other sport you'd like to do professionally** American Football  
**Surprising fact** My cousin, Jonathan Mills, plays for Sale

In a team full of youngsters, it's important to have senior figures and the effect of James, Alun Wyn Jones and Dan Biggar returning to the region's ranks after the World Cup was clear from their results. Having won just one of their opening six

Guinness Pro12 fixtures – that a narrow 25-22 victory in Treviso – they turned a corner with a 36-3 thrashing of Zebre at the start of November, followed it up with a win over in-form Exeter in the European Champions Cup and then picked up two bonus points in what seemed to be a lost cause against Clermont.

James is happy to speak up in meetings and hopes to encourage the same from the younger squad members. "The floor's always open (at the Ospreys). The coaches like to be challenged and one of the reasons the region wanted me is for my leadership and chat, so there were different voices."

"Bath were very strong on leadership groups, on players standing up and speaking a lot, so I've been used to doing that for three years. It helps others to speak up and be confident in what they're saying, and that can make you a better player."

"This season we haven't had the best of starts, but everyone's stuck to it and I've been impressed by the whole squad. Sometimes youngsters can go into their shells, but in fairness no one was hiding away from any of it; they took it on the chin and stood up, which is nice to see."

James has also been passing on his front-row expertise – and given that he is likely to hit the 200 appearances mark for the Ospreys this season, he has plenty of knowledge to share! He says the milestone isn't on his mind, but he has no plans to slow down for his region or his country. He's signed a two-year deal and will see how he



feels come 2017 as to whether he keeps playing, while he is keen to add to his 65 Wales caps.

There is still a sense of what might have been when looking back at the World Cup, but he can also see the positives in so many players getting international experience as a result of the terrible run of injuries Warren Gatland's side suffered.

"Looking at the big picture, we did pretty well, but obviously there's a part of us that felt we could have gone on further because we came close in

► **Forward march**  
 James brings Test nous to the Ospreys





#### PERSON YOU'D LIKE TO MEET

Elvis – The King! You hear stories about what he used to do and I think he'd have been interesting to meet

#### RUGBY FUNNY

Ian Evans rings a bell for me. At a lineout in a heated match once he was marking someone with yellow gloves and he said: "I've got the one with the Marigolds!"

#### TOUGHEST OPPONENT

Nicolas Mas is always tough – he's a tricky shape to play against. And the Italian boy, Lorenzo Cittadini, is a big, strong lump

a couple of games. The Australia and South Africa games are the ones you look back on and think we should have won. But that's international rugby – make a mistake and pay the price.

"One big positive to come out of the World Cup was that we blooded a lot of youngsters and the experience they gained there will be massive for Wales in years to come."

Some of those youngsters will be looking to get the better of veteran James in the coming weeks when it comes to those derby days! **EW**



## NEWS ROUND-UP

**DRUG BANS** Merthyr's Owen Morgan (four years) and Glynneath's Greg Roberts (two) have been banned for anti-doping violations. See [wru.co.uk/antidoping](http://wru.co.uk/antidoping) for the rules.

**DUAL DEALS** Ospreys Dan Baker, Scott Baldwin, James King and Rory Thornton have all signed National Dual Contracts,



while centre Jonathan Davies (below) will be back at the Scarlets next season on an NDC.

**EXPERT HELP** The WRU have launched an initiative, High Performing Parents, offering the parents of Wales U18 and U20 players advice through workshops and seminars.

**FULLY BOOKED** Tickets for Wales v Scotland have already sold out, but seats are available for the France and Italy Six Nations games from [wru.wales/tickets](http://wru.wales/tickets)



# Sutherland closing in on Scotland spot

The Edinburgh prop tells RW's Katie Field about his rise through the ranks

**R**ORY SUTHERLAND came within a whisker of winning his first Scotland cap this year, not once but twice. It will happen for this prop – and soon – but in the meantime he has two entertaining stories to tell.

Take his first call-up. Scotland were training at BT Murrayfield on the Wednesday before their Six Nations match against Italy in late February. Sutherland, in his first season on a full-time academy contract, was also there, preparing for Edinburgh's game against Cardiff Blues.

"I was standing at a coffee machine outside the changing room, and Gavin (Scott), the Scotland team manager, came out and I asked him to show me how to work the machine," Sutherland says. "He said, 'We need you as the 24th man for the game against Italy'. I couldn't believe it! I was sneaking around trying to steal a coffee, then I was in the Scotland squad!"

Sutherland did the captain's run with the national side, and the pre-match warm-up on the Saturday, but wasn't needed in the final squad and had to leave Murrayfield at half-time to fly to Wales ready for Edinburgh's game.

With Alasdair Dickinson, Gordon Reid and Ryan Grant all ahead of him in the queue to wear Scotland's No 1 jersey, Sutherland wasn't involved in the World Cup build-up, but events on Friday 16 October showed he wasn't far from coach Vern Cotter's mind.

"About half an hour before I was due to leave for Murrayfield to play Ulster, I got a phone call from Gavin and he said, 'Do you want the good news or the bad news?'. I said, 'The bad news' and he said, 'You're not going to be playing Ulster tonight, but we want you to join us for the World Cup quarter-final against Australia'.

"Ryan was injured so they needed me as cover. I had to catch a plane at seven and this was about 4.30." He said a hasty goodbye to his family, flew to London and joined the squad

for their final three days at RWC 2015. "Everybody was welcoming and it was a fantastic experience and it made me hungry to strive for more," he says.

Dickinson tipped Sutherland as a future Scotland prop in these pages last winter and it looks like his

prediction was spot-on, but the 23-year-old has had to fight a few battles to get this far.

Sutherland took up rugby at primary school, and went on to play at Hawick High School, and local clubs Hawick Albion, Linden and Wanderers, before making his senior debut at Hawick, where his dad had been a centre. "He must have been slimmer and quicker than me," quips this 6ft, 18st good-humoured Borderer.

A flanker up to that point, the Scotland U18 coaches suggested he move to prop. "I was up there with the weight of the props! And there were a lot of good flankers in my age group – people like Hamish Watson."

However, Sutherland was left to muddle through in the front row at Hawick, then Biggar, until ex-Scotland prop George Graham took him under his wing at Gala.

"That was when my rugby took off. I had been playing prop for three years but I relied on brute strength and ignorance, and never knew how to do it! George taught me some tricks of the trade and I was lucky that I had a place in the starting line-up all the time I was learning."

He had two seasons at Gala and impressed enough to play twice for the Scotland Club XV, then Edinburgh boss Alan Solomons brought him into the Murrayfield fold in 2014. Assistant coach Steve Scott has worked hard to help Sutherland improve and Dickinson has passed on his experience. "Steve is very patient! And Al has been a brilliant help. He's never just left me to it. If I've had a question, he has always answered it."

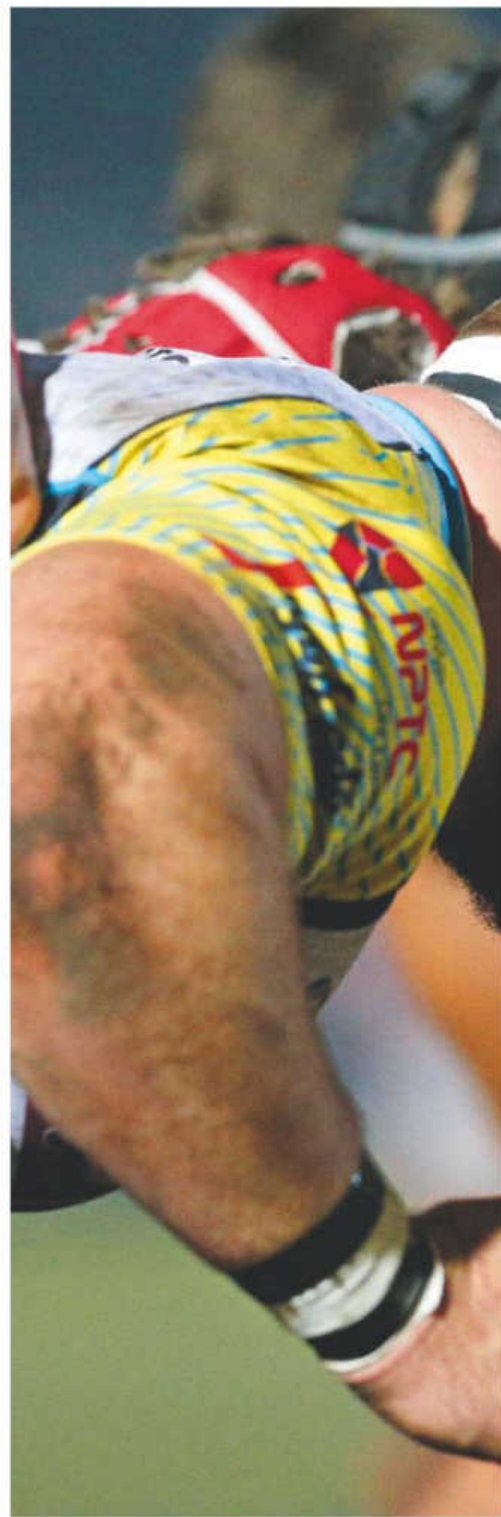


## QUICK-FIRE

### PROFILE

**Name** Rory Brodie Sutherland  
**Nickname** Suzz  
**Age** 23 (24 Aug 1992)  
**Birthplace** Melrose  
**Married?** Girlfriend Tammy Redpath, son Mason, three  
**Twitter** @Rorysuzz  
**Personality** Cheerful  
**I like to cook...** Burritos  
**Last book read** I'm a prop, I don't read  
**Holiday** Mum and Dad took me to Disney World, Florida, when I was kid and I loved it  
**How you switch off** Spend time with my son. On a day off, I go out with him and our French bulldog, Buster  
**Person you'd like to meet** Ronda Rousey, the UFC fighter. She is pretty cool  
**Childhood rugby hero** Ross Ford! It's weird playing next to him now

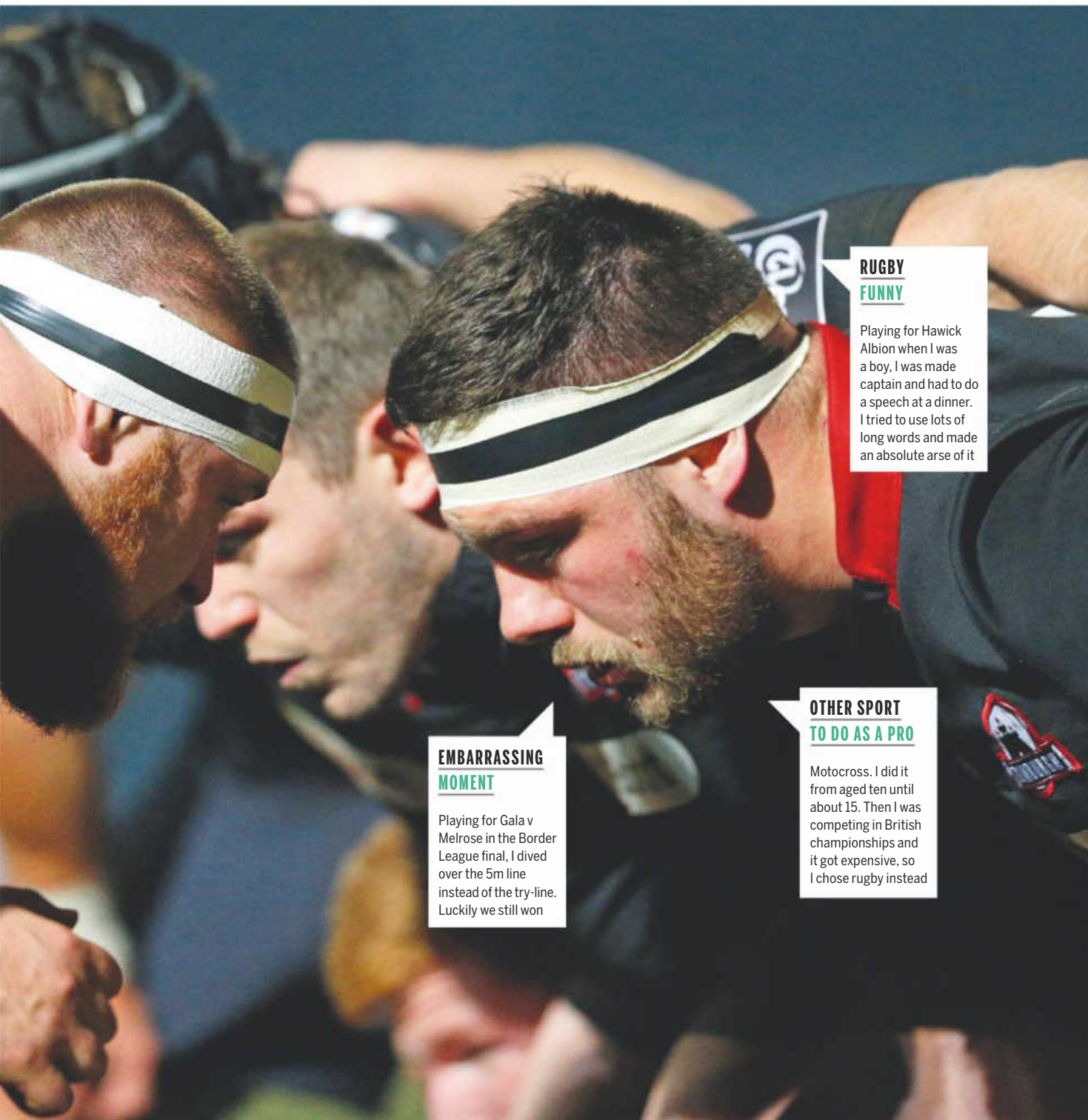
► **Head down**  
 Sutherland prepares for a scrumpage



Sutherland is a regular in Edinburgh's Guinness Pro12 and European Challenge Cup squads, and the team have a big month ahead as they look for back-to-back wins over London Irish in Europe, then try to defend the 1872 Cup against Glasgow.

He made just a cameo appearance off the bench during Edinburgh's cup-clinching 20-8 victory over the Warriors last season, so he hopes to play a bigger role this time. "I always look forward to playing against guys I'm competing with in the Scotland





#### RUGBY FUNNY

Playing for Hawick Albion when I was a boy, I was made captain and had to do a speech at a dinner. I tried to use lots of long words and made an absolute arse of it

#### EMBARRASSING MOMENT

Playing for Gala v Melrose in the Border League final, I dived over the 5m line instead of the try-line. Luckily we still won

#### OTHER SPORT TO DO AS A PRO

Motocross. I did it from aged ten until about 15. Then I was competing in British championships and it got expensive, so I chose rugby instead

squad. It is good to get a shot against them and show your worth."

Having lost to Gloucester in the Challenge Cup final last spring, Edinburgh are especially keen to shine in that competition and they made a fine start, beating Grenoble 28-10 and Agen 27-6 last month. Can Edinburgh win the pool? "Of course. We have to take it a week at a time, but we're feeling confident."

Both Sutherland and Edinburgh are trying to take their chances to claim a big prize – 2016 might be their year. **NEW**



## NEWS ROUND-UP

**NEW No 2** Georgia hooker Shalva Mamukashvili has signed a six-month deal with Glasgow Warriors, with Kevin Bryce, Fergus Scott and Fraser Brown all injured.

**AL OUT** Scotland back-row Ally Strokosch (right) has retired from Test rugby with 47 caps. Coach Vern Cotter said: "For almost



a decade he's quietly gone about his business with exceptional professionalism."

**HIGH-END MEETING** Two in-form BT Premiership sides clash on 12 December when Ayr host Heriot's. Ayr were in top spot with nine wins from 12 and defending champions Heriot's were on eight wins.

**FIRST OFFICIAL** Irish referee John Lacey will referee Scotland's 2016 Six Nations opener against England on 6 February.



# Second time's the charm for Nacewa

Leinster's returning hero is relishing the opportunity to win more trophies

**N**EVER GO back," they say. "It won't live up to your memories." Isa Nacewa has ignored that perceived wisdom and returned to Leinster two years after he retired from playing and joined the Blues' coaching set-up in his native New Zealand, *writes Katie Field*.

And so far his faith that the U-turn would work out for the best is utterly unshaken. "We arrived in Dublin, drove through the port tunnel and started living again," he smiles. "I was here for a successful time, winning five trophies in five years. Turning down the chance to have another crack at it would have been foolish in my eyes. I would have considered it failing if I didn't come back."

Nacewa missed Leinster so much in his first year back in Auckland that he couldn't bring himself to watch their games on TV. He returned in May 2014 to watch his old team-mates beat Glasgow in the Guinness Pro12 final and be there for the retirement of Brian O'Driscoll and Leo Cullen, and he said it felt like coming home.

In 2013 he had retired just short of his 31st birthday "for family reasons" and, with three daughters aged under five at the time, it made sense for him and his wife Simone to be near their extended families. But he kept in touch with his old team-mates, including Shane Jennings and Cullen, and early this year started talking with them about returning.

"Time away from the game mentally refreshed me and physically did wonders for my body. I never wanted to play for anyone but Leinster and when the opportunity arose and a joke and some comments turned into something real, it wasn't a hard decision. It was a great opportunity."

Nacewa spent his last few months with the Blues putting in hours of fitness work outside of his coaching commitments to get himself ready for pre-season training with Leinster. By the time his new contract started,

Matt O'Connor had been replaced by Cullen, which didn't faze Nacewa.

"I was looking forward to working with Matt but getting the news that Leo was going to be head coach was awesome. Knowing what he was like as a leader, I was full of confidence."

A few short months later Cullen was asking Nacewa to step up to the leadership plate. When Leinster's temporary captain (for the duration of RWC 2015) Kevin McLaughlin had to retire due to concussion, the Kiwi was asked to take over. Leinster legend O'Driscoll approved, as he tweeted: "I'd play for him alright", while Nacewa himself said: "I had mixed emotions. Kevin was forced to retire, which was an awful Monday, but I was honoured to be asked to do it."

"I was super excited – then I didn't sleep much that night! It is such a feeling of responsibility. It's such a proud club."

This month Nacewa will lead his side into the toughest of battles as they play title holders Toulon in a European Champions Cup Pool Five double-header on 13 and 19 December. Nacewa has a pedigree to be proud of in Europe, winning the Heineken Cup three times in four seasons with Leinster, but he hasn't faced Toulon before. The French club have only played 35 games in Europe's top competition, but they have lifted the trophy for the past three seasons.

"As a rugby player I want to test myself against the best," he says. "We will have to be at our absolute best to beat Toulon and we will have to peak two weeks in a row."

Having lost 33-6 to Wasps in their opening Champions Cup game in Dublin – a match Nacewa missed through injury – and been beaten 19-16 by Bath last month, Leinster face an uphill battle to qualify for the knockout stages. But Nacewa has



## QUICK-FIRE PROFILE

**Name** Isikeli Nacewa  
**Age** 33 (22 July 1982)  
**Birthplace** Auckland  
**Married?** To Simone, twin daughters Mia and Ellie (six) and daughter Lucy (four)  
**Superstitions** I have the same playlist on the way to the ground for every game  
**TV show** NFL RedZone  
**Last book read** *Life, Game and Glory* by Ray Lewis, the American Football player  
**Holiday destination** Any beach with sun and surf  
**Dish you most like to cook** Spaghetti Bolognese  
**Rugby hero** Zinzan Brooke  
**Other sport you'd like to do professionally** NFL  
**Person you'd like to have met** Bob Marley  
**Team-mate you'd like to be** Mike Ross, for one hour  
**Best moment in rugby** Captaining Leinster for the first time

► **In the groove**  
Isa Nacewa breaks against Glasgow

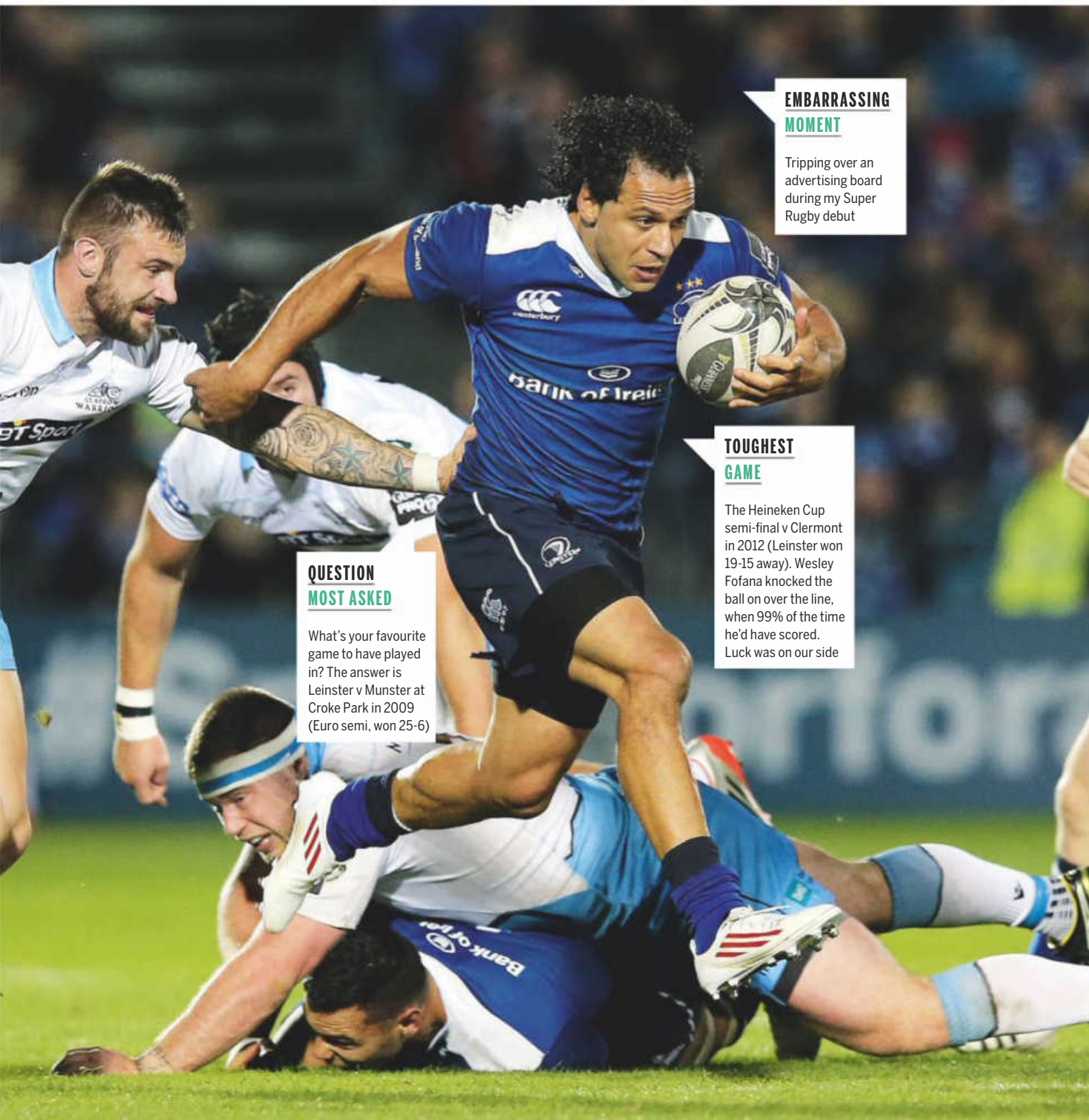


confidence in his squad's ability. "I consider every pool a 'pool of death' because of the quality of the teams in the competition. As soon as the Monday of a European week comes around, it's a very different feeling. Everything goes up a notch."

"We've definitely got the guys to be able to win. We have the most genuine competition inside our group in any of the years I have been with Leinster."

He has been impressed with the emerging talents of Ross Molony and Garry Ringrose, and says when





### EMBARRASSING MOMENT

Tripping over an advertising board during my Super Rugby debut

### TOUGHEST GAME

The Heineken Cup semi-final v Clermont in 2012 (Leinster won 19-15 away). Wesley Fofana knocked the ball on over the line, when 99% of the time he'd have scored. Luck was on our side

### QUESTION MOST ASKED

What's your favourite game to have played in? The answer is Leinster v Munster at Croke Park in 2009 (Euro semi, won 25-6)

Ireland's World Cup players returned to the province, disappointed to have lost in the quarter-finals, they brought an extra edge to training.

The European final wins over Leicester (2009), Northampton (2011) and Ulster (2012) hold cherished memories for Nacewa, but he is not dwelling on them. "You never forget those days, but at the forefront of my mind I want to create more of them."

This month Leinster need to rise to the challenge if their returning hero is to get his wish. **EW**



## NEWS ROUND-UP

**GRASS IS GREENER** Ireland coach Joe Schmidt officially opened Clontarf's 4G artificial pitch, which allows all the club's teams to train together at Castle Avenue.

**SAM'S HAUL** Sam Windsor (right), the Australian fly-half who joined Ulster from Worcester this season, scored 15 points in



the province's 30-5 win over Bristol in the first round of the British & Irish Cup.

**HOME STAGE** Next year's Six Nations home games for Ireland U20 and Women will be played at Donnybrook, kicking off with the Wales fixtures on 5 and 6 February.

**NEW OFFICIAL** Australian referee Angus Gardner, 31, will make his Six Nations debut when he takes charge of Ireland v Italy on 12 March.





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